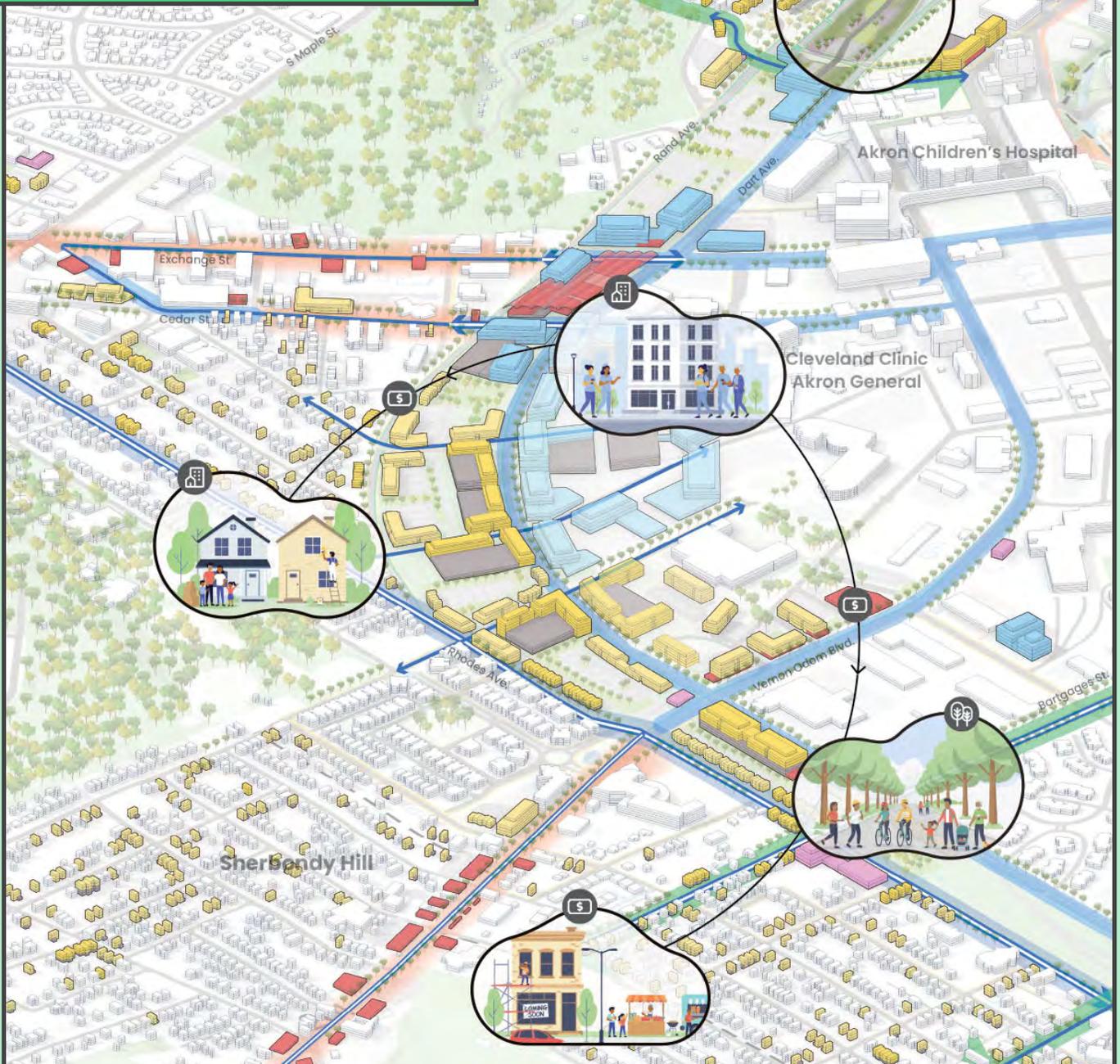


# Reconnecting Our Community

## Akron Innerbelt Master Plan



# Letter from the Mayor

The Akron Innerbelt Master Plan represents a pivotal moment in our city's journey – a moment of reflection, collaboration, and reimagination. This planning process has been a two-phased effort, each phase rooted deeply in community engagement and a shared commitment to acknowledging our past in order to shape a better, more inclusive future.

Phase One, led by Liz Ogbu and the team at Studio O, centered the voices of Akron residents through more than two years of thoughtful and heartfelt community engagement. The resulting Phase One Report captured the hopes, concerns, and dreams of many who were impacted by the Innerbelt's history, gave voice to the need for a framework of healing and repair in future plans, and laid a strong foundation for the next step forward.

Phase Two, led by Sasaki Associates from August 2024 through December 2025, builds on that foundation with a multi-disciplinary approach that brings together expertise in planning, transit, economic development, infrastructure, engagement, architecture, and housing. Guided by the power of community voice, a core priority of my administration, the plan embodies what is possible when technical expertise and local lived experience meet in true partnership.

I believe the resulting Innerbelt Master Plan is an opportunity for Akron. It is an opportunity for economic growth in a key corridor of our city. It's an opportunity

to bridge divides created by an act of generational inequity. It's an opportunity for the healing of deep wounds. Out of immense pain can come incredible empowerment and I look at this plan as a guidebook for how that can happen in our community.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Innerbelt Advisory Group for their ongoing dedication and thoughtful contributions throughout this process. I also want to thank every person who joined a meeting, attended an event, or offered feedback along the way. Your willingness to share your time, your stories, and your perspectives made this work possible. Recognizing the harm done in the past helps us prioritize healing and repair as an essential part of our path forward for what once was the Akron Innerbelt. This incredible collective effort reflects our shared commitment to listen, learn, and reflect together as a community.

The Innerbelt Master Plan is more than a document; it is a call to action. It shares information and strategy, prepares us for implementation, and invites Akron to take the lead in shaping the next chapter of this place. Decisions made today, and every day for generations forward, will build toward and beyond this 30-year vision. Together, we can move toward a future built through community, connection, and shared prosperity.

**Shammas Malik**  
Mayor, City of Akron

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# Reconnecting Our Community

## Introduction to the Innerbelt Master Plan

**The Innerbelt Master Plan is part of Akron’s multi-year, community-led effort to reimagine the future of the Innerbelt, a 4-mile, partially decommissioned highway that cuts through the center of the city. Building on the *Reconnecting Our Community – Phase 1* work led by Studio O between 2020 and 2023, this Master Plan advances a community-driven vision for repairing and regenerating the Innerbelt area over the next 30+ years.**

### A Plan that Honors the Past

The Innerbelt’s construction, begun in 1970, displaced people, homes, and businesses, destroyed tightly-knit neighborhoods, and inflicted immense harm – particularly on Akron’s Black community (see “Remembering,” page 6) – only to result

in a “highway to nowhere.” This tragedy was not an isolated episode. In Akron and other cities around the country, the building of urban expressways like the Innerbelt were linked to practices like redlining and urban renewal, which targeted “blighted,” disinvested urban areas and resulted in disproportionate and long-lasting harm to Black and other disadvantaged communities.

Seen in this larger context, the Innerbelt Master Plan has a responsibility to address the cumulative legacy of past discriminatory urban development practices. This is why the Master Plan’s overarching ambition is “repair” – remembering and learning from the past, and planning for a future that benefits the communities who suffered the greatest historical harm.

### A Plan that Looks to the Future

Funded by an inaugural Reconnecting Communities grant from the US Department of Transportation, the City of Akron, community partners, and a team led

by Sasaki developed the following Master Plan over a one-year process that started in October 2024. Mindful of the mistakes of past top-down planning, the process incorporated community voices every step of the way (see “the Community’s Plan,” page 10).

The resulting Master Plan makes repair tangible and practical, pairing physical changes (e.g. infrastructure, open space, and mixed-income housing) with programs and policies (e.g. anti-displacement, small-business support, cultural memory, youth services). It also balances ambition with pragmatism: while fully decommissioning and removing the Innerbelt will take decades, the Master Plan lays out a pragmatic roadmap of incremental, intermediate steps – including some that can start delivering tangible benefits within the next 5 years. The Master Plan also recommends a framework of governance and oversight that will ensure steady, transparent implementation.

### Navigating the Plan

The Master Plan document is organized as follows.

**Section 1, Principles and Goals for Repair**, articulates the shared definition of “repair” that was developed with the community. It is the foundation of the Master Plan, serving as the north star and measure of success for all of its ideas.

**Section 2, Strategies, Projects, and Tools**, makes repair tangible with actionable ideas. It includes recommendations for place-based projects (e.g. infrastructure improvements, real estate development) and social impact tools (e.g. policies and programs), organized around 5 “big move” strategies.

**Section 3, Visions of Transformed Neighborhoods**, shows what different parts of the Innerbelt area could look like in the short- and long-term future.

**Section 4, Implementation Framework**, discusses how the Master Plan’s ideas can be funded and implemented, and how to ensure that implementation adheres to the Master Plan’s long-term vision.

**Appendices A and B** contain details of all the place-based projects and social impact tools, which are referenced throughout the document.

### After the Plan

The Innerbelt Master Plan is a crucial step in the Reconnecting Our Community effort, but is far from the end of it. Beginning in 2026, the Master Plan will give rise to capital projects, program and policy efforts, and partnership development that are part of a patient, incremental approach to implementation. In addition, the City is committed to continuing the work of historical memorialization first started through the *Phase 1* work.

Reconnecting Our Community is a movement, and a movement takes all of us to succeed. We hope that you can see your own ideas for the future reflected in this Master Plan, and that you will continue to stay engaged in this historical effort as we work to turn the Master Plan into everyday change.

# Remembering

The construction of the Innerbelt made a significant impact on the City of Akron. For many, it meant losing family homes, schools, neighborhood businesses and places of worship, and it left a physical barrier between neighborhoods and downtown. Memories of this have informed the path forward. Healing must start with honest acknowledgment, and solutions must center on the strengthening of neighborhoods as a first step in repair and transformation. Memorializing this history throughout is important.

## Remembering history to build a better future...



Source: Studio O - Reconnecting Our Community Phase 1 Report - 2023

**700+**  
households displaced

Source: Studio O - Reconnecting Our Community Phase 1 Report - 2023

**14**  
broken street grid connections between neighborhoods & downtown

**100+**  
businesses lost

Source: Studio O - Reconnecting Our Community Phase 1 Report - 2023



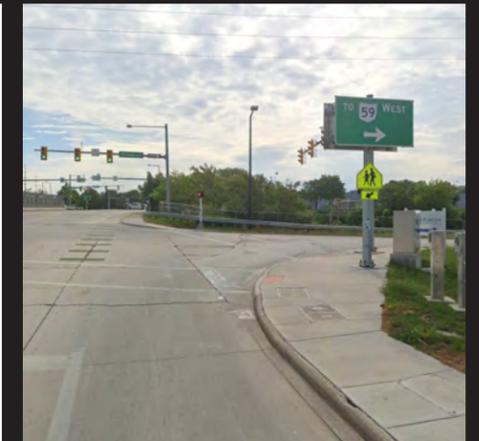
Source: The GroundTruth Project

# Understanding

The Innerbelt study area includes both the land on which the roadway sits and adjacent neighborhoods that were impacted by its construction. Healing this area means starting in the neighborhoods. To understand the potential and physical opportunities, vacant and underutilized land, roadways, topography of the Innerbelt area, connections, demographics, neighborhood assets and more were analyzed, building a complete picture of the Innerbelt study area.

## Key study area details:

**9**  
miles of Innerbelt roadway, bridges & ramps to untangle



Source: The GroundTruth Project

**2**  
important Black commercial & cultural centers lost (Howard St. & Wooster Ave.)

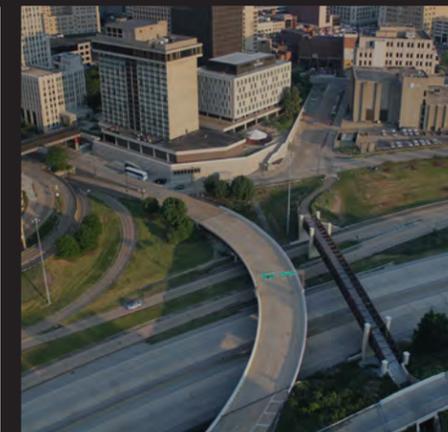
**445**  
# of acres demolished for "Urban Renewal"

**50**  
acres of decommissioned Innerbelt

**840**  
# of acres in the study area  
*(that's nearly 4 Akron U campuses)*

**~2000**  
existing households

**30 ft.**  
depth of Innerbelt trench in some areas



**~60**  
acres of vacant & underutilized land

# Learning

The community's expertise at all levels (history, daily experience, and memories) was critical to shaping a plan for the future rooted in social and physical healing. Listening sessions, conversations, online surveys, and both large and small gatherings created space to share what is needed to envision a thriving future for all. The results of this process are reflected throughout this plan document: in guiding principles, goals, actions, and design solutions.

**This work incorporates learnings from:**



**40+**  
partner  
conversations

**900+**  
community  
interactions

**4**  
large community  
gatherings

**600+**  
open house  
participants



**72**  
coordination &  
strategy meetings

**15+**  
small group  
discussions

# Building

The Innerbelt area vision reflects the ideas of many, organized to create a framework to guide development for the next few decades. The recommendations are for new development, an improved roadway network, neighborhood-strengthening initiatives and policy updates to support healthy, balanced, and just growth. Individual projects will occur over the next several years to build pieces of the vision and transform the Innerbelt's future to one that heals and repairs.

**The cumulative impact of this work could include:**



**20+**  
lots identified for  
new neighborhood  
businesses

**4,500+**  
new homes

**7+**  
miles of improved  
streets

**6+**  
new connections  
to parks, plazas, &  
public spaces

**11**  
new and/or  
improved street  
connections



**30+**  
suggested  
programs & policy  
updates

# The Community's Plan

The Innerbelt Master Plan was co-created by Akron residents, the City, and the planning team. Community voices shaped what was studied, how goals were set, and which projects and policies advanced.

## A Year of Listening & Co-design

Over one year, engagement moved through four phases:

**Level Setting:** residents named current conditions and lived impacts in the Innerbelt area.

**Goals & Ideas:** an initial list of project and policy ideas was generated from shared goals.

**Initial Directions:** early concepts were brought back for critique and feedback.

**Community-Led Refinement:** the community helped to refine actions and sharpened focus.

Across these phases, community members were engaged through 4 large public events, and over 15 small-group and 1:1 conversations. Engagement was designed for access, and voices of those most affected by the Innerbelt's harms were centered through targeted outreach in the West Akron neighborhoods.

More than 40 Akron-based organizations whose missions align

with plan priorities were convened over the course of the planning process. Their expertise grounded the work and surfaced partnership opportunities the City will advance during implementation, such as infill housing development and small business support.

A volunteer Innerbelt Advisory Group – a group of civic leaders with deep ties to the area – guided the process. They will continue as a standing body for implementation oversight.

### COMMUNITY COORDINATORS



Carla Davis



Ebony Hill

Two Akron-based “community coordinators” have been critical linchpins of the community engagement process. Their extensive ties in Akron and nuanced understanding of local history and culture helped mobilize and recruit the community into the planning process, and create spaces of trust and mutual understanding between the community, the City, and the planning team.

## A Year of Engagement, At a Glance

○ Size of circle indicates approximate size of attendance



**Large Gatherings**  
Open houses and launch party served as major milestone markers in the process



**Small Groups**  
Focus groups, 1:1s, and “meals & conversations” brought residents together to focus on specific project issues



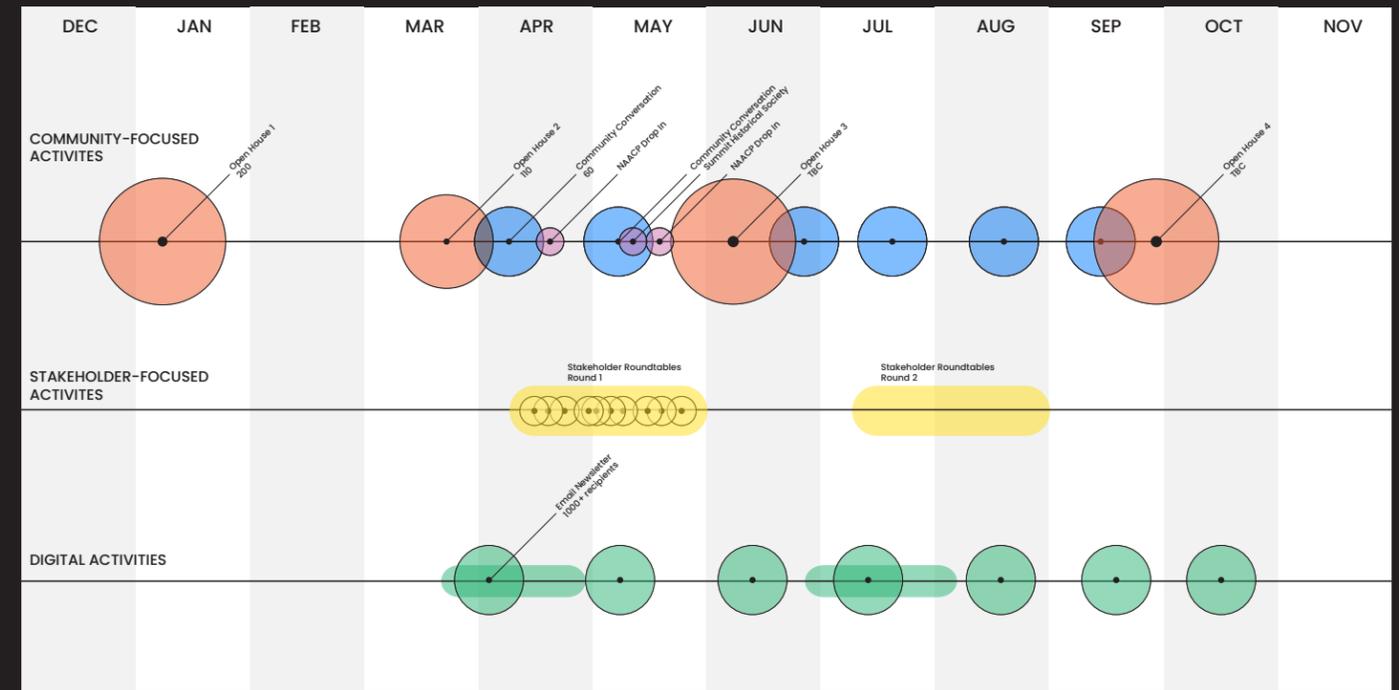
**Pop-ups / Drop-ins**  
These took the planning process to where the community is already gathering



**Digital Engagement**  
Include new content on the Innerbelt website, social media outreach, digital surveys, and a monthly Innerbelt email newsletter



**Stakeholder Engagement**  
These include convenings of Akron-based organizations and meetings with the Innerbelt Advisory Group



**Open House 1**  
Ed Davis Community Center



**Open House 2**  
Akron Urban League



**Open House 3**  
Lock 3 Park



**Launch Party**  
Akron Urban League



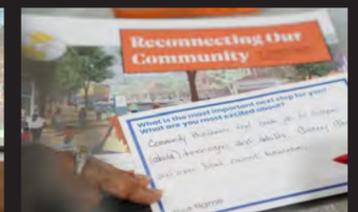
**Meal & Conversation #4**  
Srinda Teahouse



**Ice Cream Social**  
Gus Johnson Community Center



**Pop-up**  
Summa Health - Juneteenth Celebration



**Citizens Guide**  
Digital & Printed

02

# Principles & Goals for Repair

# Defining Repair through Community Principles & Goals

The Innerbelt Master Plan is part of a larger community-led movement in Akron to reckon with the harmful legacies of discriminatory urban development in the 20th century.

This work builds directly on earlier efforts, especially the Reconnecting Our Community – Phase 1 report. Over more than two years of conversations, Phase 1 documented the vibrant Black civic, commercial, and cultural life that once existed here, as well as the destruction and displacement brought by Urban Renewal and the construction of the Innerbelt. It showed that the community’s losses were social, economic, and psychological as well as physical, and called for repair and healing to guide all future work.

This Master Plan contributes to that movement by showing how repair can be a forward-looking practice. It asks: What actions can be taken today that begin to address the physical, social, economic, and psychological losses of the past? And how can a future be imagined for the Innerbelt area that, while it cannot recreate what was lost, still honors and learns from it? The Master Plan is organized around answering these questions.

**The first step in this work is to provide a concrete definition of repair – in the words of the community that suffered most from past harms. Through community conversations (see facing page), their words were distilled into Principles and Goals for Repair, shown on the subsequent pages.**

## How Did the Community Shape These Principles & Goals?

In Open House 1 and a number of subsequent smaller conversations, community members were asked to say in their own words “what should the future of the Innerbelt land look like?” This question builds on the work of the *Phase 1 Report*, and is intended to surface community goals in an open-ended way. Subsequently, over 150 of these responses were gathered, thematically categorized, and synthesized into the goals on the next page. In Open House 2, these Principles and Goals were brought back out to the community, and the community was invited to validate and further edit these goals.



Over 150 Answers

7 Themes

19 Goals

# Principles & Goals for Repair

These Principles and Goals form the foundation of the Master Plan. They define “what good looks like” for the future of the Innerbelt area and serve three key functions:

## Ideation

The Principles and Goals provided a framework for ideation, helping community members understand and come up with tangible ideas about what repair might look like to them.

## Evaluation

The Principles and Goals were used as an evaluation framework for planning ideas. Ideas were prioritized so long as they demonstrate a strong connection to these Principles and Goals.

## Governance

By codifying community aspirations, these Principles and Goals can serve as a “constitution” for redevelopment around the Innerbelt in the years to come.

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

**Repair means improving economic opportunities in the areas impacted by the Innerbelt**

- 01 Leverage the former Innerbelt land to create value, and ensure that the value is re-invested back into the community
- 02 Grow quality job opportunities and support Akronites in accessing them
- 03 Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses
- 04 Support local entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses

## HOUSING

**Repair means housing that is high-quality, secure, and accessible to Akronites with diverse needs**

- 05 Prevent displacement of existing residents, and support their housing needs
- 06 Promote new supply of mixed-income rental housing
- 07 Promote new supply of mixed-income homeownership options, and broaden pathways to homeownership

## ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

**Repair means safe, welcoming public spaces and access to nature and recreation**

- 08 Develop and maintain public spaces that are safe, welcoming, and accessible to residents
- 09 Improve access to Akron’s network of trails and green spaces from neighborhoods that were cut off by the Innerbelt

## MOBILITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

**Repair means physically reconnecting Akron’s neighborhoods, and providing them with safe, comfortable ways of getting around**

- 10 Repair the physical connections between Downtown and the predominantly Black West Akron neighborhoods severed by the Innerbelt
- 11 Create a safe and comfortable environment for walking, biking, taking transit, and getting around without a car

## HISTORY, CULTURE & IDENTITY

**Repair means preserving and celebrating Akron’s history and cultural identity**

- 12 Preserve and celebrate Akron’s Black history
- 13 Memorialize the harm done by Urban Renewal
- 14 Create opportunities to celebrate Akron’s contemporary identity and cultural creativity
- 15 Develop a new identity and name for the Innerbelt land that reflects its rich history and looks to the future

## COMMUNITY WELLBEING

**Repair means improving services that enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of the community**

- 16 Support community and non-profit spaces that provide recreational, educational, health, and wellness activities to the community, particularly the youth
- 17 Enhance access to programs and services that address community wellbeing

## COMMUNITY POWER

**Repair means the community has a say in future development decisions**

- 18 Align the Innerbelt Master Plan with the vision defined by the community
- 19 Establish an inclusive public forum (organization) for ongoing engagement and community feedback in the decision-making processes related to the Innerbelt Master Plan

# Bridging Repair & Reparation

The Innerbelt Master Plan is part of a larger community-led effort that began with the *Reconnecting Our Community – Phase 1* initiative. Both phases share the same commitment to address the physical, social, economic, and psychological effects of Urban Renewal and the Innerbelt on Akron’s historically Black neighborhoods.

*Phase 1*, led by Liz Ogbu of Studio O, centered resident voices and documented stories of harm and resilience. It articulated a community vision for reconnection and called for repair and healing as guiding principles. This Master Plan – Phase 2 of the *Reconnecting Our Community* effort – carries that vision forward into implementation. It translates community priorities into concrete strategies to reshape land use, infrastructure, and policy through a justice-centered lens. Rather than a new beginning, it is the next step in a continuous process of community-led transformation.

## Defining Repair in the Context of Reparation

The first step in this work is to define repair in a way that bridges residents’ lived experiences with reparative frameworks drawn from planning, land use, and public policy. The harms caused by the Innerbelt were not only spatial, but also emotional, cultural, and spiritual. A neighborhood was replaced with a highway that never fully served its purpose and remains underused today. The same tools once used to divide – zoning, infrastructure, public investment – must now be redirected toward healing, reconnection, and shared prosperity.

This plan draws from the concept of **Reparative Spatial Justice**, as described in *Grounding Justice: Toward Reparative Spatial Futures in Land and Housing*.

Seen through this lens, repair and reparation are not competing ideas, but points along the same continuum of justice. The Master

Plan’s investments in Sherbondy Hill and other affected areas (see “Invest in the Neighborhoods,” page 28), its anti-displacement tools (see page 35), and its emphasis on community governance (see page 120) all represent tangible expressions of reparative spatial justice designed to restore what was lost, while empowering residents to shape what comes next.

“

Reparative Spatial Justice is a transformative approach to rectify historical and ongoing injustices in the allocation and use of space, housing, and land. It is aimed at reconfiguring spaces where historically marginalized communities can reclaim their connection to land and gain restitution for enduring racist policies and practices. This approach involves rectifying past wrongs and shaping inclusive, equitable spatial futures, with a focus on communities’ active participation and agency in creating their own environments.<sup>1</sup>

”

## Building a Bridge Toward Reparative Futures

By grounding this work in repair, Akron begins to build a bridge toward more reparative futures. The goal is not to merely mitigate harm, but to reimagine what equitable development can look like when guided by those most impacted.

In this vision, the Innerbelt is no longer a void between neighborhoods but a place for reconnection, a place where new forms of movement, memory, and meaning can emerge. Strengthening links between Sherbondy Hill, West Hill, and Downtown is about more than mobility. It is about creating a renewed sense of place and a shared sense of possibility for a more just, connected, and vibrant future in the entire Innerbelt area.

This plan turns the question from what was lost to what can now be built together. By reclaiming the instruments of planning including land, infrastructure, policy, and public investment, the City and its residents can transform the legacy of division into a reparative future.

<sup>1</sup> PolicyLink, *Grounding Justice: Toward Reparative Spatial Futures in Land and Housing* (Oakland, CA: PolicyLink, 2024), executive summary, p. 4.

03

# Strategies, Projects & Tools for Repair

# Strategies, Projects & Tools for Repair

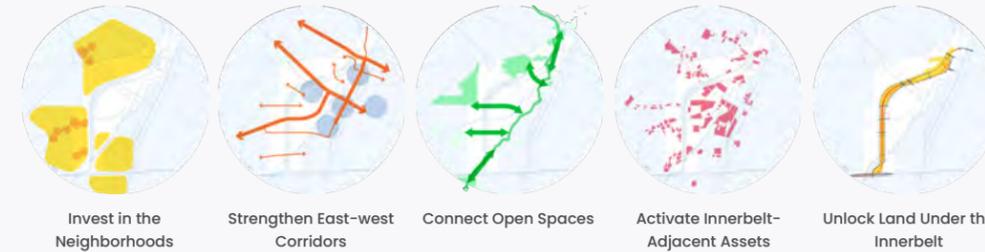
## Turning community goals into concrete, tangible actions for repair

While the Principles and Goals for Repair establish a shared north star for the future, they only matter if they are paired with a clear plan of action. This section lays out tangible, actionable planning and design ideas for regenerating the former Innerbelt land and repairing the highway's historic harm. Many of these ideas have come directly from the community or build on existing efforts; all have been vetted with the community through the Master Plan engagement process.

### HOW THE IDEAS ARE ORGANIZED

## 5 Strategies

The 5 Strategies represent the “big moves” of the Master Plan. Each one focuses on a particular aspect of repair and activates a specific set of resources. Together, they provide the organizing framework for the Master Plan’s ideas.



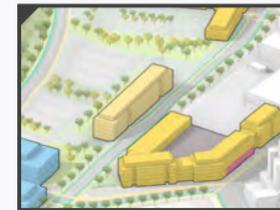
### WHERE TO READ ABOUT THESE IDEAS

These strategies will be clearly explained one by one in this section.



## Place-based Projects

Place-based Projects are incremental improvements to the physical built environment around the Innerbelt. They include changes like safer streets, new housing, and mixed-use developments.



Example - Mixed-use Development



Example - New Open Spaces



Example - Improvements to Streets & Intersections

See Appendix A, page 124 for a full catalogue of these Place-based Projects.

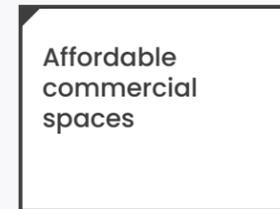


## Social Impact Tools

Social Impact Tools focus on people rather than only on the physical environment. They include programs, policies, funding, real estate strategies, and governance efforts designed to repair the social and economic harms of the Innerbelt and Urban Renewal.



Example of Funding Tools



Example of Real Estate Tools

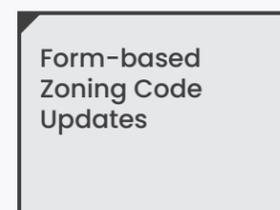


Example of Program & Policy Tools

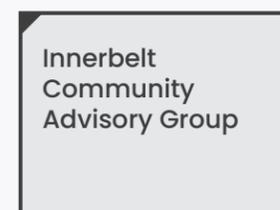
See Appendix B, page 162 for a full catalogue of these Tools.

## Implementation Frameworks

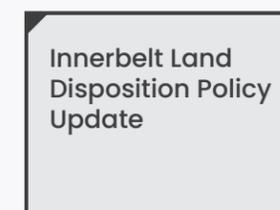
The Implementation Framework outlines how these ideas become reality and establishes guardrails to keep future decisions aligned with the community’s vision.



Example of Regulatory Tools



Example of Governance Tools



Example of Real Estate Tools

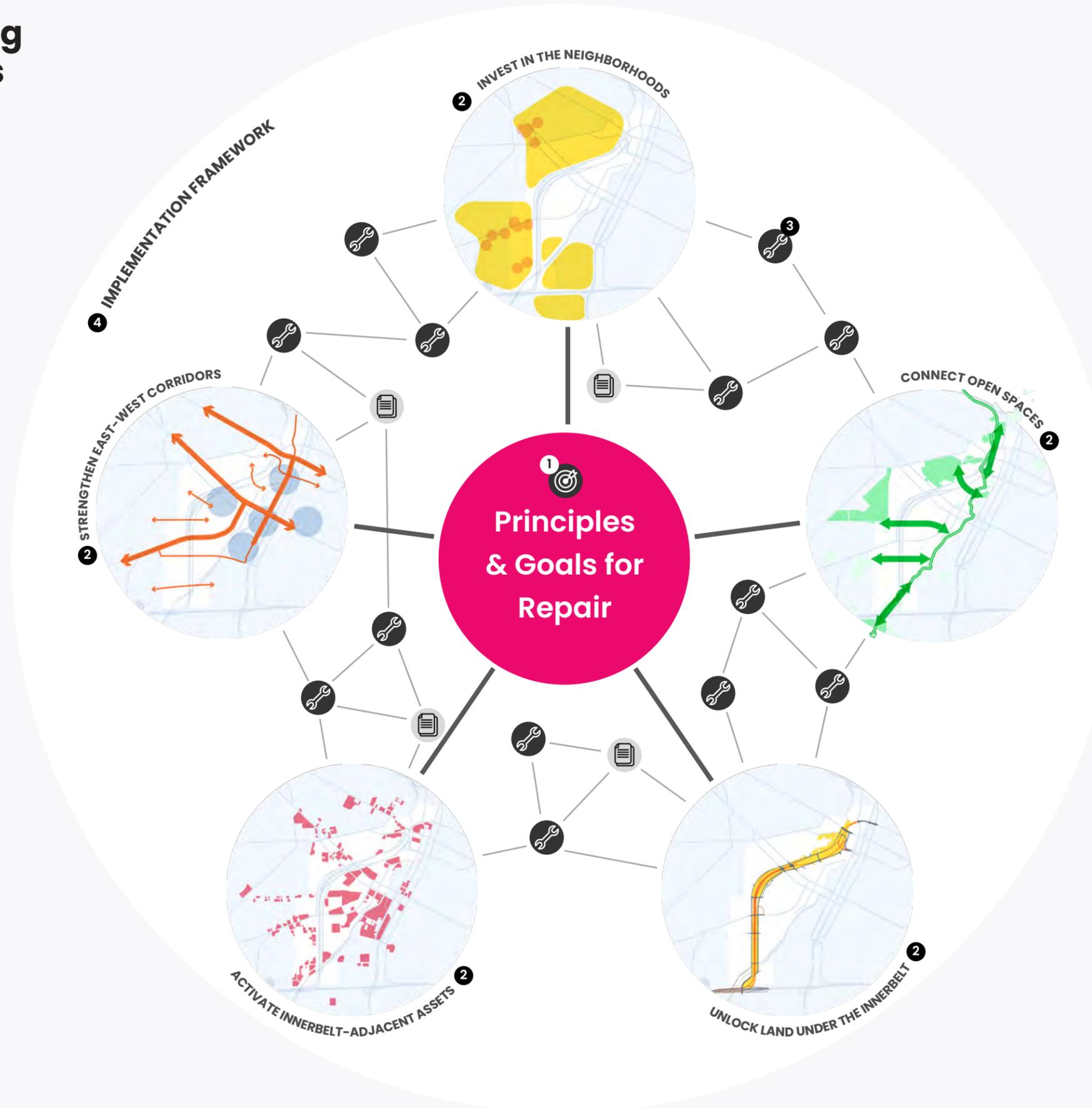
See page 102 for full details of these implementation tools.

## Repair Requires Layering Physical Improvements with Social Impact

The impact of the Innerbelt was more than physical. In demolishing homes, businesses, and the street grid, the Innerbelt also destroyed livelihoods, severed social connections, and kept many residents from building generational wealth through homeownership. Those impacts still reverberate today in the form of neighborhood disinvestment and high levels of social and economic need.

Because of this, repair cannot be accomplished through physical improvements alone. It requires layering changes to the built environment with sustained investments in people, services, and community capacity. “Repair” in this Master Plan is inherently holistic. It is as much about addressing the Innerbelt as a physical barrier as it is about repairing and regenerating Akron’s social and economic life, particularly that of its Black community.

In the strategies that follow, Place-based Projects and Social Impact Tools are intentionally integrated. They work in tandem to advance the reparative goals of this Master Plan. While these Strategies (like “Unlocking Land under the Innerbelt”), will take decades to be



achieved in full and need to navigate major political and economic uncertainties, work can start now with incremental projects that can deliver immediate benefits with relatively low cost, while laying the groundwork for major transformations to follow.

### GOALS, STRATEGIES, PROJECTS & TOOLS: HOW THEY FIT TOGETHER

- 1 **Principles & Goals** provide a community-driven northstar for “what good looks like”. These guide the entire effort.
- 2 **5 Strategies** outline the “big moves” for achieving the community-driven goals.
- 3 **Place-based Projects** and **Social Impact Tools** are the incremental, tractable, and achievable steps that put the 5 strategies in action.
- 4 **Implementation framework** provides the methods and guardrails for making it all happen.

## Repair Leverages Existing Investments, Assets & Capacities

These strategies recognize that work to repair the harm of Urban Renewal and the Innerbelt began long before this Master Plan and seek to build on this past work in an intentional way. This is especially important when the City of Akron has limited funding, staff capacity, and other resources to carry out the Master Plan by itself. As a result, these Strategies do more with what exists, multiplying the impact of current efforts and existing resources and helping to build a larger, more enduring movement in Akron toward community regeneration and collective resilience.

### Building on Existing Civic Investments

Significant public and private investments have occurred near the Innerbelt in recent years. These include street improvements for pedestrians and cyclists, such as along Main St. and Exchange St.; new public spaces, such as Lock 3 Park; and local economic development efforts, such as Market on Main. The Master Plan Strategies seek to build on the momentum of these recent investments and better connect historically impacted communities to their benefits.

### Thoughtfully Leveraging Public Land Assets

One of the most important resources at the City of Akron's disposal is publicly owned land. These land assets give the City a powerful lever to shape and encourage development that directly benefits the community. They also represent a source of financial value that can be reinvested in

community priorities for repair.

Because these assets are finite, they must be used thoughtfully. The Master Plan strategies, especially "Activate Innerbelt-adjacent Assets," provide guidance on how to use City land to support affordable housing, community facilities, and other public-serving uses, and capture value from market-rate development in ways that can be directed back into historically impacted neighborhoods.

### Aligning Local Capacities

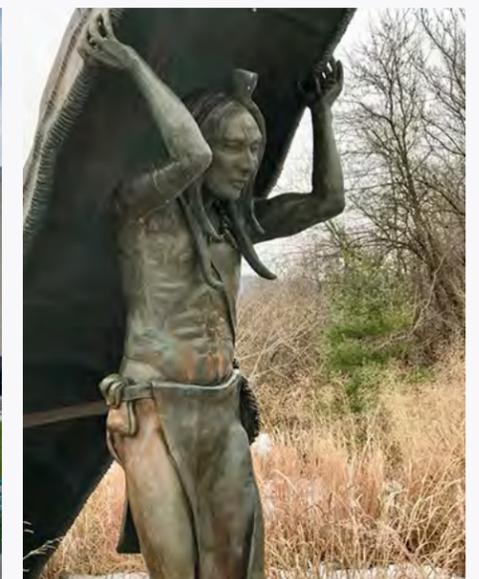
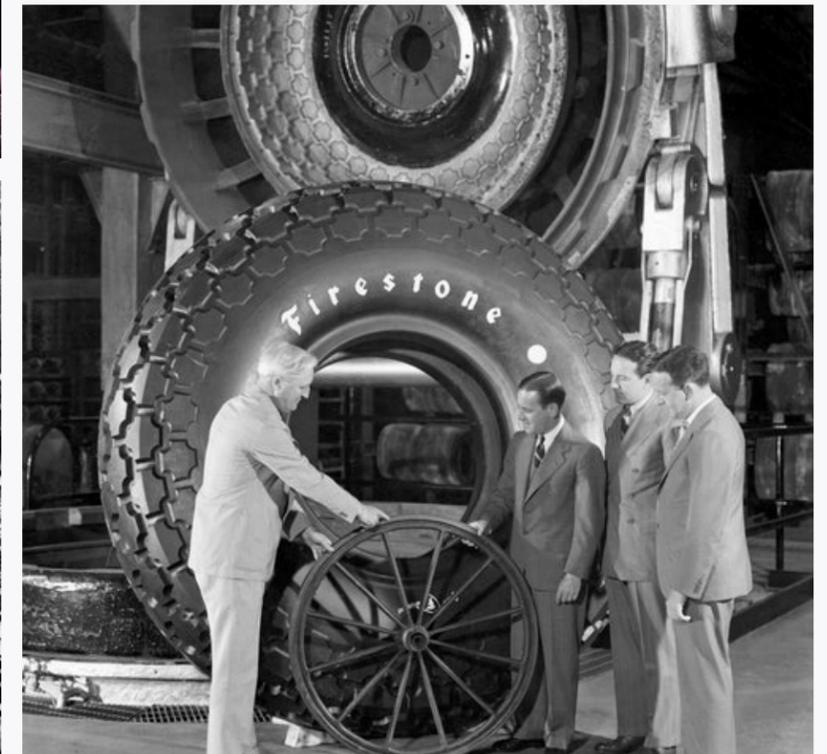
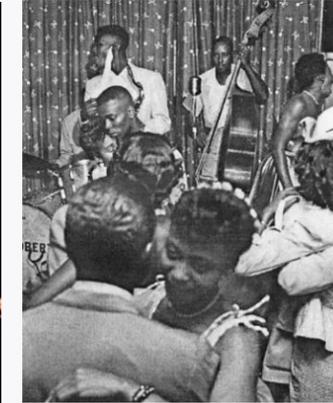
Finally, the City of Akron cannot implement the Master Plan alone. Repair and regeneration of the Innerbelt area require aligning the efforts and capacities of many partners: major institutions, community organizations, philanthropic partners, and local residents.

Fortunately, many partners in Akron are already working toward goals that align with this Master Plan's mission. The strategies outlined in this section identify ways to:

**Coordinate compatible real estate development** on Innerbelt-adjacent institutional land;

**Partner with local organizations to deliver Social Impact Tools** such as housing support, small business assistance, and youth programs; and

**Leverage existing networks and initiatives** so that work already underway can be better targeted to, and better serve, the neighborhoods most affected by the Innerbelt.



STRATEGY

# Invest in the Neighborhoods

Channel investment into the communities historically most impacted by the Innerbelt



A key strategy for repair is to direct investment beyond the Innerbelt right-of-way and into the neighborhoods that have been most impacted by Urban Renewal and the Innerbelt. As a legacy of this history, neighborhoods such as Sherbondy Hill have experienced the loss of local businesses, chronic underinvestment in housing, and limited access to basic services like healthy food.

The Neighborhood-based Investment strategy seeks to reverse this damage by supporting the revitalizing of historically significant commercial corridors such as Vernon Odom Blvd., and encouraging infill housing

development on vacant lots, among others. Social Impact Tools like housing repair and anti-displacement programs will be deployed to ensure that existing residents will benefit from increased investment, rather than be displaced by it.

Neighborhood-based investment off the Innerbelt is closely tied to development on and near the Innerbelt. Over time, value generated by development on Innerbelt land should be directed back into the neighborhoods that experienced the greatest harm, reinforcing a cycle of repair rather than displacement.

## What Are Key Elements of This Strategy ...

## ... and How Do They Address Community Goals for Repair?

### KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

### HOW IT RELATES TO COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

#### HOUSING

##### Infill Housing Development

Encourage the development of mixed-income housing on vacant or underused lots to supply more housing options and provide pathways to homeownership

##### Home Repair & Anti-displacement Initiatives

Invest in the rehabilitation of existing housing, and support existing residents staying in place

**05** Prevent displacement of existing residents, and support their housing needs

**06** Promote new supply of mixed-income rental housing

**07** Promote new supply of mixed-income homeownership options, and broaden pathways to affordable homeownership

#### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

##### Support Historic Neighborhood Commercial Corridors

Support the revitalization of Vernon Odom Blvd. and Exchange St. as the historic commercial and civic hearts of the neighborhood, by supporting existing small businesses, attracting new investment, and improving the streetscape

**03** Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses

**04** Support local entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses

**12** Preserve and celebrate Akron's Black history

#### MOBILITY

##### Community Mobility Corridors

Improve pedestrian safety in the neighborhoods, especially along the Rhodes Ave. "community asset corridor", which connects residents to many key community resources like the Akron Urban League

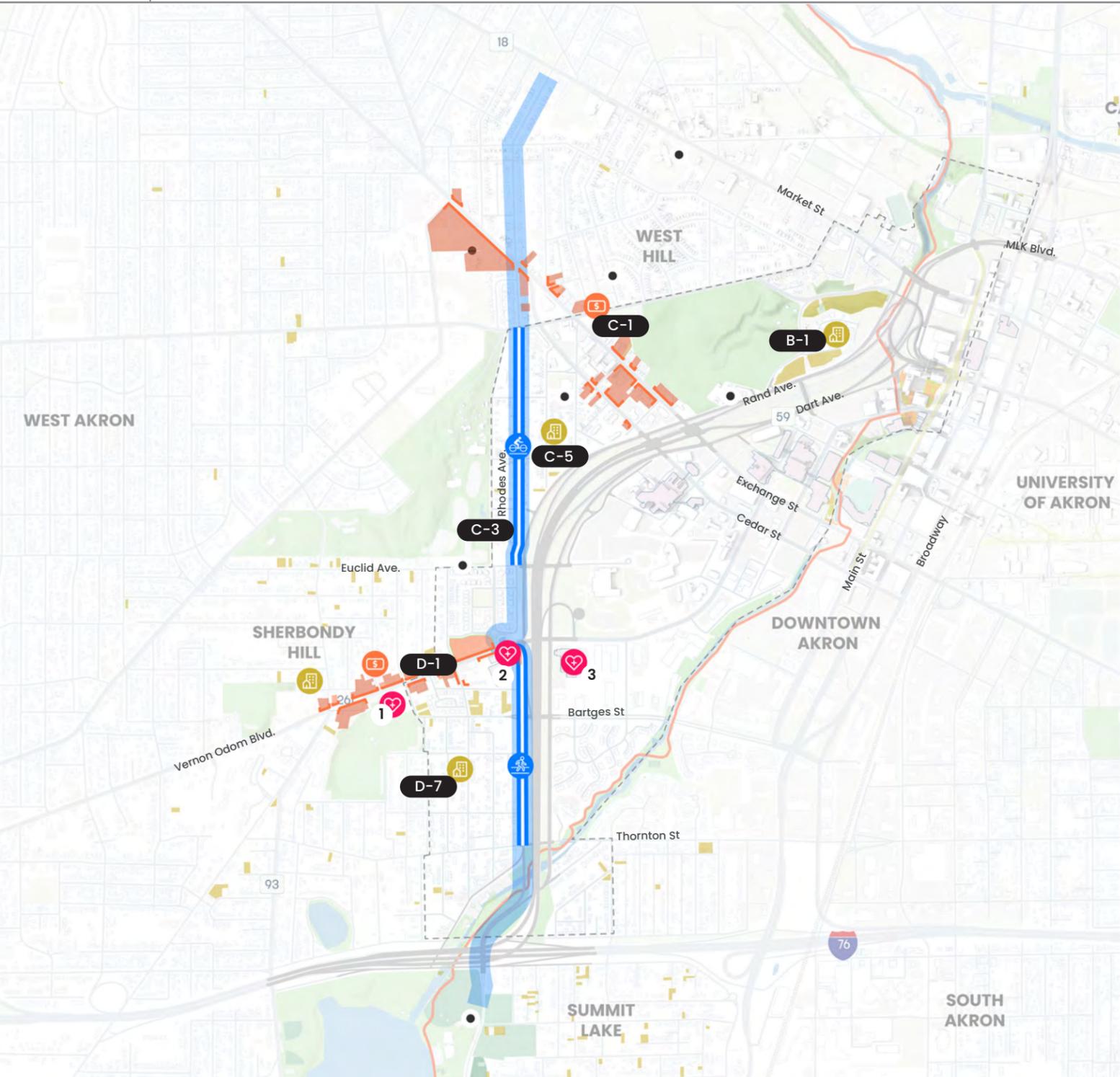
**11** Create a safe and comfortable environment for walking, biking, taking transit, and getting around without a car

#### COMMUNITY WELLBEING

##### Expand Access to Key Community Services

Expand access to existing resources for childcare, health care, and healthy food, and strategically invest in new ones

**17** Support programs and services that address community wellbeing



**KEY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS**

- 1 Vernon Odom Branch Library
- 2 Akron Urban League
- 3 Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank

# What Will Investing in the Neighborhoods Look Like?



**KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY**

**PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**

**COMPLEMENTARY SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS**



**Infill Housing Development**

- B-1 Oak Park Drive Infill Housing
- C-5 Rhodes Triangle Infill Housing
- D-7 Sherbondy Hill Infill Housing

- T-23 Public land contributions
- T-22 Training and support programs for small, local housing developers
- T-27 Community Land Trusts / shared community ownership of land

**Rehabilitate Existing Housing and Supporting Existing Residents**

- T-17 Loans and tax-incentives for renovation of existing affordable housing
- T-19 Real estate tax abatements for low-income homeowners and low-cost rental



**Support Historic Neighborhood Commercial Corridors**

- C-1 Exchange St. Commercial Corridor Development
- D-1 Vernon Odom Blvd. Commercial Corridor Development

- T-3 Affordable neighborhood retail space for small businesses
- T-7 Affordable and flexible office, incubator or commercial space to incubate entrepreneurship
- T-1 Small business loans and funding for investment in business expansion



**Community Mobility Corridors**

- C-3 Rhodes Ave. community asset corridor improvement



**Expand Access to Key Community Services**

- T-30 Fresh food access programs

# How Has Community Input Shaped the “Invest in the Neighborhoods” Strategy?

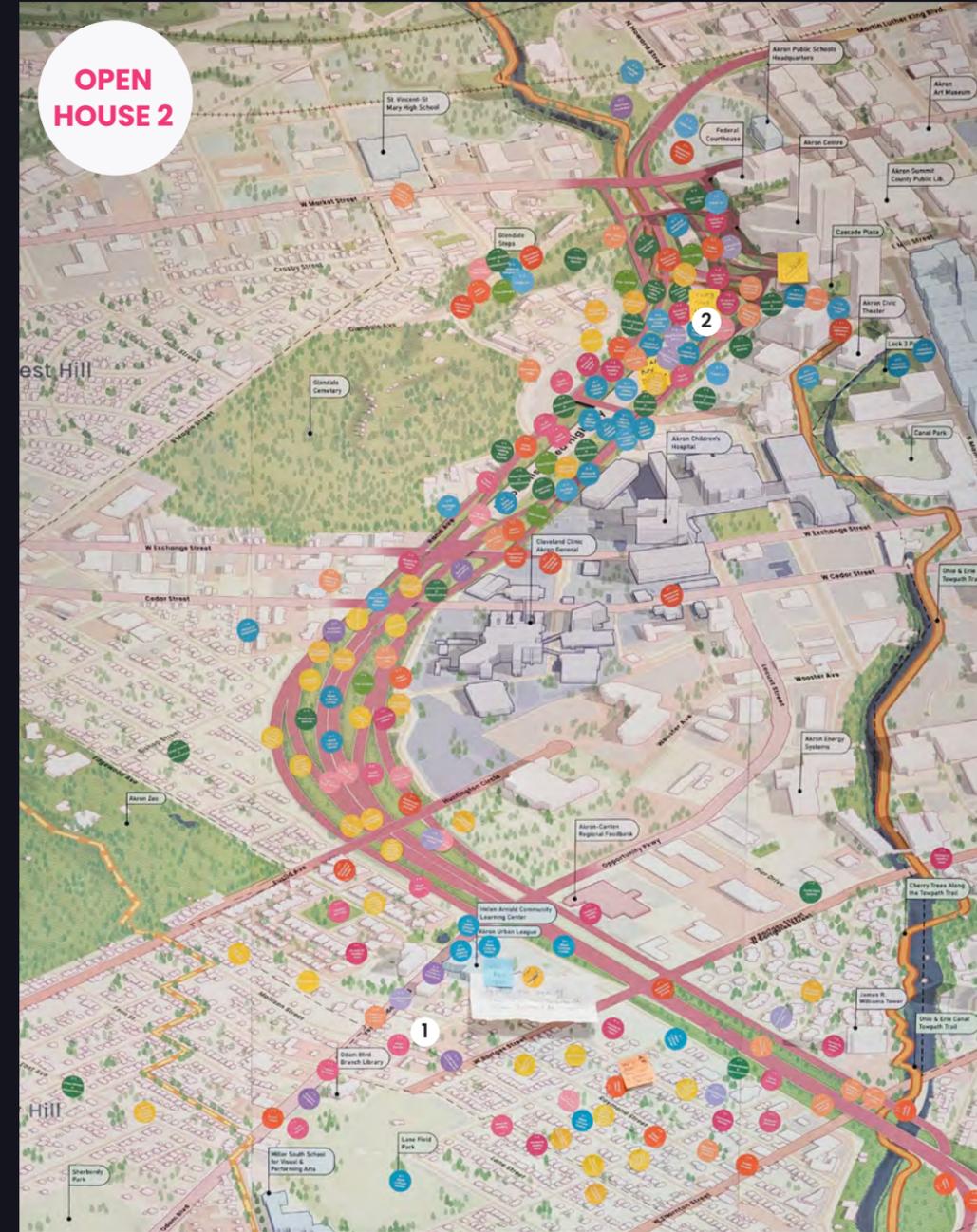


At Open House #2 and in community conversations, residents emphasized that true repair must reach beyond the Innerbelt site itself and into the neighborhoods most impacted by its construction. Neighborhoods such as Sherbondy Hill, where many displaced families resettled, were highlighted continuously by community members.

Through the “Make Your Mark on the Innerbelt” mapping activity, community members identified where they wanted to see investment, from neighborhood businesses and affordable housing to new green spaces. The results were clear: while the Innerbelt land remains important, the majority of ideas were for nearby neighborhoods, with a strong focus on corridors like Vernon Odom Boulevard.

Community members also stressed that this work must directly support Black Akronites and their descendants who were harmed by the Innerbelt and displaced into these areas, ensuring that investments flow into the neighborhoods where this diaspora continues to live.

These insights, paired with community dialogue, highlighted the need for the Master Plan to prioritize surrounding neighborhoods as well. The project categories elevated through this activity directly informed the Place-Based Projects proposed in this strategy, which has been designed to reflect the community’s vision for reinvestment, opportunity, and long-term wellbeing.



<sup>1</sup> As part of the “Make Your Mark on the Innerbelt” exercise, community members consistently indicated Vernon Odom Blvd. and Sherbondy Hill should be invested as part of the Master Plan.

<sup>2</sup> The decommissioned Innerbelt area was also highlighted by community members.

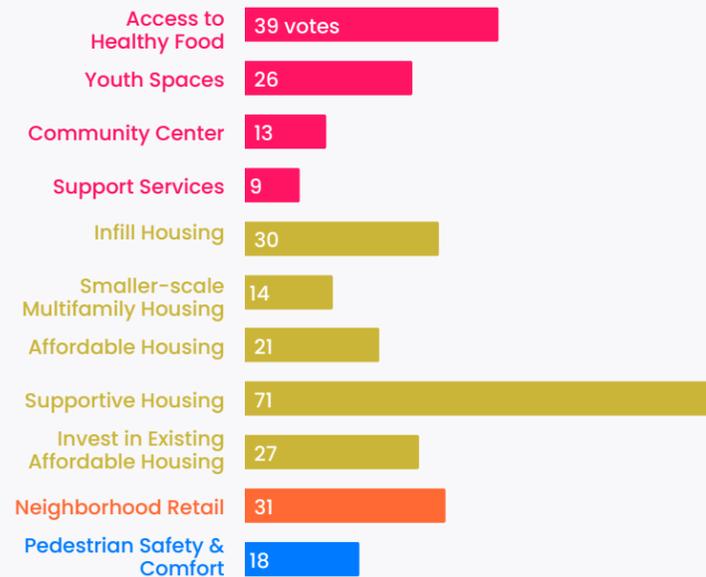
<sup>3</sup> The “Invest in the Neighborhoods” strategy was shaped by both the number of times projects were marked on the map and where community members placed them.

<sup>4</sup> Feedback that informed this strategy was collected during Open House #2, which ~100 people attended.

<sup>5</sup> Community Coordinators held additional sessions with the community to further the prioritization process, reaching ~40 community members.

## “MAKE YOUR MARK ON THE INNERBELT”

Community feedback on potential investments from Open House #2 was leveraged to help prioritize potential projects in the “Invest in the Neighborhoods” strategy.



## PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

These projects correspond to the prioritized list of potential investments from the community.

- C-3** Rhodes Ave. Community Access Corridor
- B-1** Infill Housing Development on Oak Park Drive
- C-5** Infill Housing Development in Rhodes Triangle
- D-7** Infill Housing Development in Sherbondy Hill
- C-1** Support Exchange St. as a Commercial Corridor
- D-1** Support Vernon Odom Blvd. as a Community Commercial Corridor
- C-2** Cedar & Exchange Complete Streets Improvements
- D-2** Vernon Odom Blvd. Complete Streets Improvements



# Layering Place-based Projects and Social Impact Tools to Effect Equitable Neighborhood Change

Neighborhood-based investment in the Innerbelt area neighborhoods must be guided by a central principle: that new investments into the area must benefit, rather than displace, current residents. This is made possible by the careful layering of Place-based Projects with the use of Social Impact Tools. Here are some examples of how this can be achieved.

## ☑ Infill Housing Development

### COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

- 🎯 06 Promote new supply of mixed-income rental housing
- 🎯 07 Promote new supply of mixed-income homeownership options, and broaden pathways to affordable homeownership

### 🏠 EXAMPLE OF PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

#### D-7 Sherbondy Hill Infill Housing

Sherbondy Hill has a significant number of vacant sites owned by the City, the Summit County Land Bank, and private owners. These sites can be developed into housing that is mixed-income – containing both market-rate and affordable units – and diverse in type.



Recent market-rate development along Rhodes Ave. demonstrates the demand for infill housing development



Future infill housing can leverage “missing middle” types like duplexes and small walk-up apartments to meet more diverse housing needs.

Financial value captured from market-rate infill development can fund measures to support existing residents. See “Community Reinvestment Fund” on page 108

### 🏠 SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS

- T-23 **Public land contributions to lower cost of affordable housing development**  
The City can contribute development sites that it owns at reduced or no cost to lower the cost of development and improve the affordability of these new infill housing developments.  
Reduced-cost public land contribution to affordable housing should be carefully balanced with public land sale for market-rate housing development. The financial value captured through the latter can be strategically directed towards other community goals.
- T-27 **Community Land Trusts that lower land prices for affordable homeownership**  
City land contribution can be paired with Community Land Trusts and other forms of shared community land ownership. These structures keep homes permanently affordable and help residents build wealth without fueling displacement.
- T-22 **Training and support programs for small, local housing developers**  
These infill housing developments provide an ideal entry point for small, local housing developers. The City can partner with entities like DFA Minority Contractor Capital Access Program to provide support for these developers.

## ☑ Home Repair & Anti-displacement Initiatives

- 🎯 05 Prevent displacement of existing residents, and support their housing needs

### 🏠 SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS

New housing investment in the neighborhoods must be paired with investment in existing housing and support for current residents. As a result of the historic impact of the Innerbelt, there is underinvestment in neighborhood housing stock and high housing cost burden. These Social Impact Tools are meant to address that.

- T-17 **Grants, loans and tax-incentives for renovation of existing affordable housing**  
Grants, loans, and tax incentives can support the repair and renovation of existing affordable housing, keeping older owner-occupied and rental homes safe, livable, and affordable for current residents and preventing their displacement.  
While a number of local and state-level resources already exist, they are often not Innerbelt-specific and can be difficult to navigate for Innerbelt residents. The City can play an important role in coordinating, geographically targeting, and broadening access to these home repair resources (see page 173 for more details on this tool).
- T-19 **Real estate tax support for low-income homeowners**  
While Ohio state law limits the ability of the City to freeze property taxes for legacy homeowners, there are existing resources, like the **Homestead Exemption** and **Owner Occupancy Credit**, that can lower the tax burden. The City can undertake homeowner education in the Innerbelt area to raise awareness of these resources. Furthermore, an **Innerbelt Community Reinvestment Fund**, derived from value capture from future development, has more flexibility and can be deployed for this purpose.

## Support Historic Neighborhood Commercial Corridors

### Example of Vernon Odom Blvd.

#### COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

- 03 Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses
- 04 Support local entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses
- 12 Preserve and celebrate Akron's Black history

Revitalization of neighborhood commercial corridors along Vernon Odom Blvd. and Exchange St. have both practical and symbolic significance. Vernon Odom Blvd. (formerly Wooster Ave.) was a significant commercial corridor for Akron's Black community that was decimated by the construction of the Innerbelt. Today, it is home to a number of community assets (Akron Urban League, Akron Public Library) and a small number of businesses. Revitalizing Vernon Odom Blvd. is both a symbolic act of historical repair and a material enhancement to life in the community, bringing new businesses and services that meet the community's everyday needs, and creating a safe, comfortable environment for neighbors to gather and get around.

To achieve this, Place-based Projects – including the development of key City-owned parcels and streetscape improvements – should be paired with



**TOP** Historic Wooster Ave. prior to the Innerbelt  
**CENTER** Future vision for Vernon Odom Blvd., showing a revitalized retail corridor with a pedestrian-friendly design  
**BOTTOM** Innovative retail formats, like temporary pop-up or micro-retail, can start to transform these corridors in the short term. The image shows a proposed "micro-restaurant" concept proposed for the former Dollar General site ③

Social Impact Tools that support small businesses, spur investment, and foster local entrepreneurship.

#### PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

##### D-1

#### Encourage Infill Commercial Development

Leveraging City-owned sites ①, other publicly-owned sites (such as the AMHA site ②), and vacant, privately-owned buildings and parcels (e.g. former Dollar General at Moon St. ③) to encourage commercially-oriented infill

##### D-2

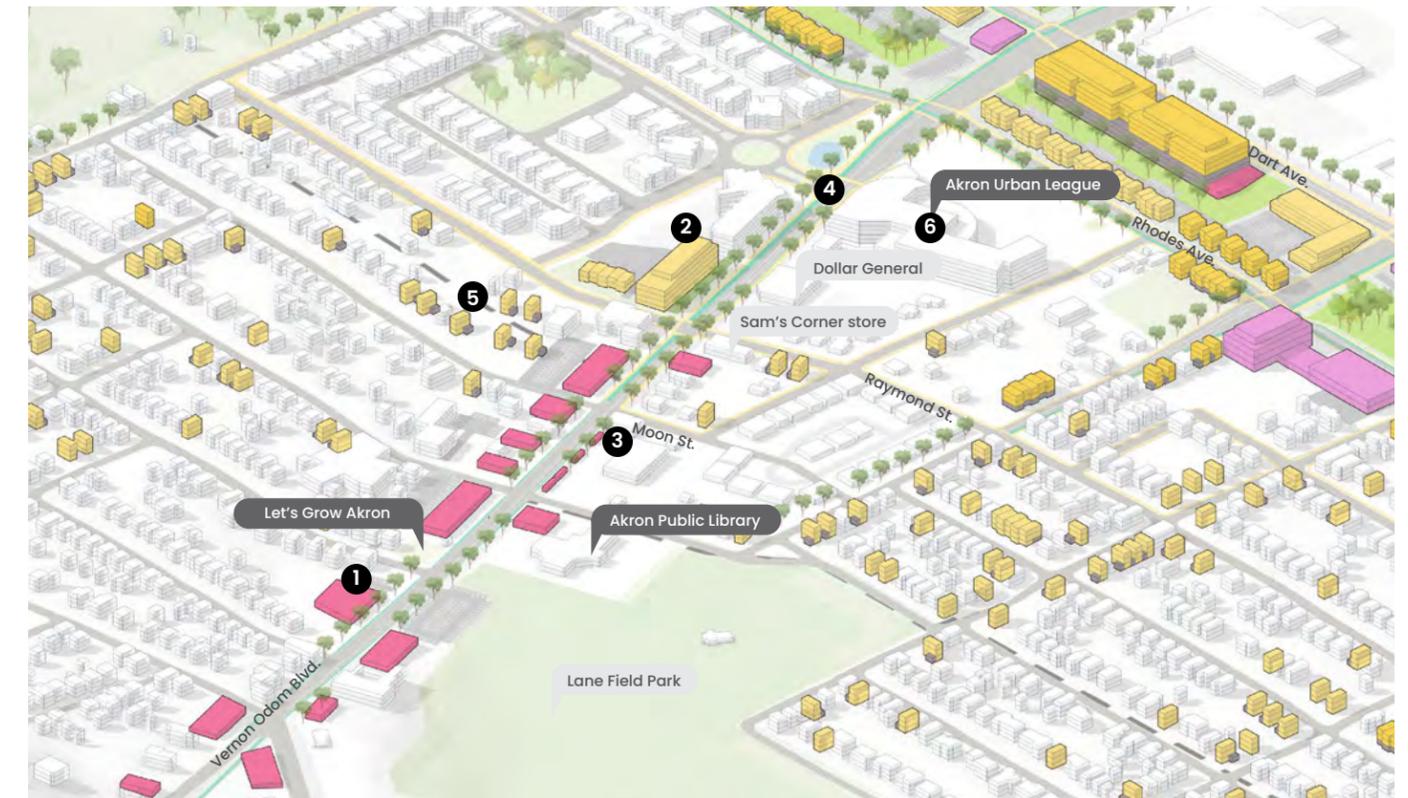
#### Complete Street Improvements

In the short term, pedestrian safety improvements (e.g. reduced curb radii and crosswalk at Edgewood Ave. ④); in the long term, Complete Streets improvements along the entire corridor

##### D-7

#### Encourage Infill Housing in Sherbondy Hill

Leverage vacant and City-owned sites to encourage residential infill development in Sherbondy Hill ⑤. New residents will help support new and existing commercial development along Vernon Odom Blvd.



#### SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS

##### T-3

#### Affordable retail spaces

Including affordable commercial spaces for small businesses and incubator spaces for entrepreneurs. The City can leverage public sites or public subsidies to create these.

##### T-1

#### Small business loans and funding for investment in business expansion

Loans and funding for investments to support small business expansion. There are a number of existing City- and state-level funding programs already existing. The City can play a role in better connecting small businesses in this area to existing resources.

##### T-6

#### Training, mentorship and support services for entrepreneurs

Local anchors like the Urban League Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC) ⑥ can target efforts to support small businesses trying to grow along the Vernon Odom corridor.

STRATEGY

# Strengthen East-West Corridors

Strengthen the key east-west corridor across the Innerbelt, improving the access of West Akron neighborhoods to jobs, services, and resources on the other side of the Innerbelt



Before the Innerbelt, streets like Market St., Exchange St., and Wooster Ave. (now Vernon Odom Blvd.) were vital social and commercial corridors that connected West Akron neighborhoods to downtown and beyond. The construction of the Innerbelt cut these streets off or transformed them into unsafe, highway-like environments, reinforcing the Innerbelt as both a physical and psychological barrier. Repairing this harm requires restoring and strengthening these east-west connections. This

strategy focuses on making these streets safer and more comfortable for people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving, improving access from West Akron to jobs, services, and amenities east of the Innerbelt; and reinforcing these corridors as neighborhood destinations for investment and development, rebuilding walkable commercial and civic hubs that serve the community and begin to replace what was lost to the Innerbelt.

## What Are Key Elements of This Strategy ...

## ... and How Do They Address Community Goals for Repair?

KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

HOW IT RELATES TO COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

MOBILITY

Provide a safer and more comfortable environment for people to get from West Akron neighborhoods across the Innerbelt, including:

**Pedestrian & Bicycle Improvements**

Improve and better maintain pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, and bike lanes

**Traffic Calming / One-way to Two-way Conversions**

Convert one-way streets to two-way to calm traffic and create a more comfortable urban environment

**Improvements to Transit**

Make transit stops better lit, safer, and more protected, and anticipate future investment in Bus Rapid Transit (BRTs) that will create faster connections to downtown jobs

**010** Repair the physical connections between Downtown and the predominantly Black West Akron neighborhoods severed by the Innerbelt

**011** Create a safe and comfortable environment for walking, biking, taking transit, and getting around without a car

*By repairing these east-west connections, West Akron communities are connected to downtown jobs and services*

**002** Grow quality job opportunities and support Akronites in accessing them

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

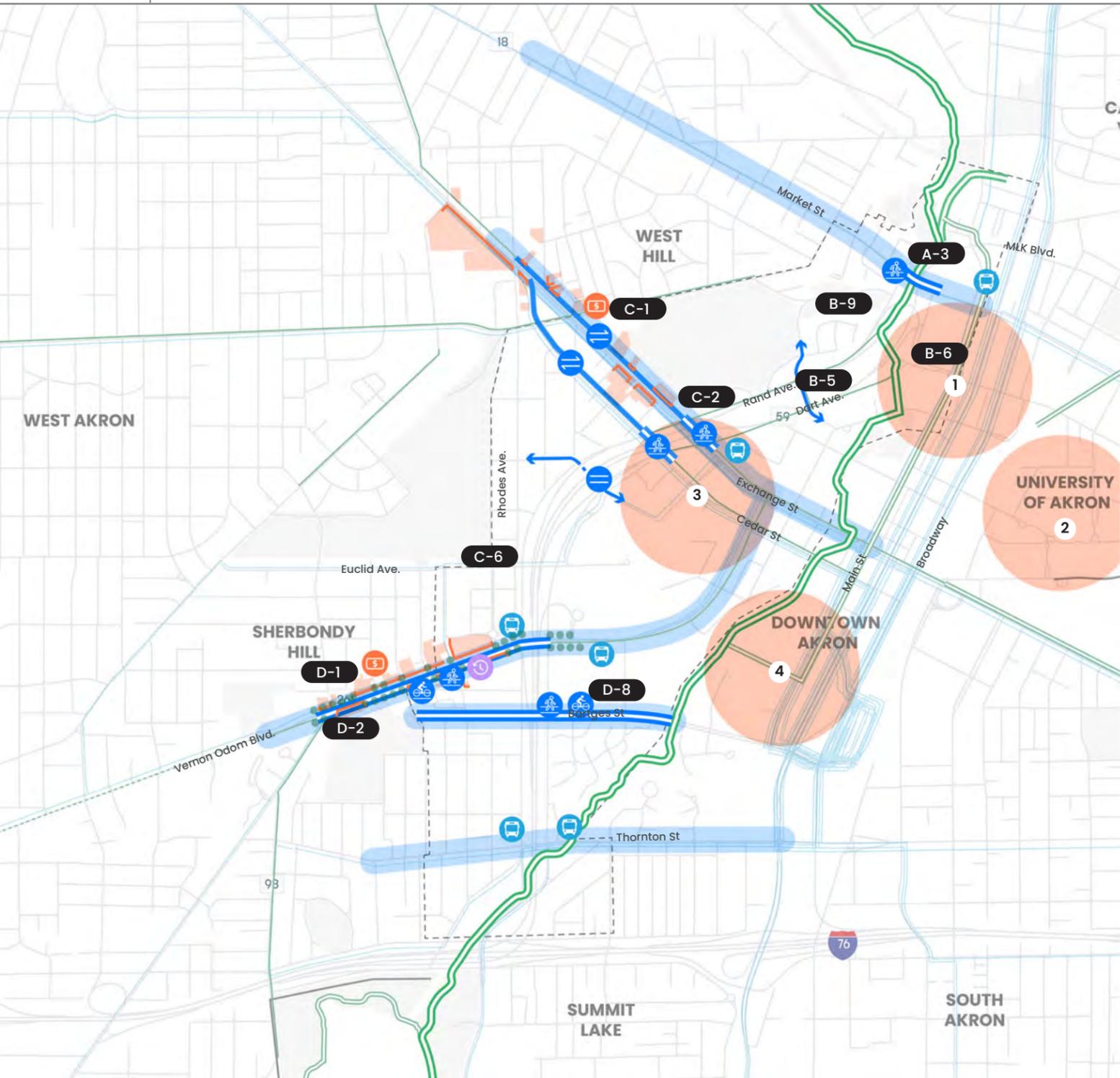
**Support Historic Neighborhood Commercial Corridors**

Revitalize Vernon Odom Blvd. and Exchange St. as the historic commercial and civic hearts of the neighborhood, by supporting existing small businesses, attracting new investment, and improving the streetscape

**003** Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses

**004** Support local entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses

**012** Preserve and celebrate Akron's Black history



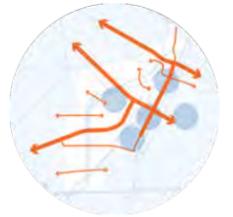
**MAP KEY**

- Major East-West Corridors
- Major Concentrations of Jobs and Services
- Towpath Trail
- Protected Bike Lanes & Trails
- On-street Bike Lanes
- Existing & Proposed Transit Corridors

**KEY DESTINATION AREAS**

- 1 Downtown
- 2 University of Akron
- 3 The Hospitals
- 4 Canal Place

# What Will Strengthening East-West Corridors Look Like?



**KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY**

- 🚶🚲 **Pedestrian & Bicycle Improvements**
- 🚦 **Traffic Calming / One-way to Two-way Conversion**
- 🚌 **Transit Improvements**
- 🏠 **Support Historic Neighborhood Commercial Corridors**

**PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**

- A-3 Market St. Bike/Ped Improvements
- B-5 Center St. Bike/Ped Improvements
- B-9 Glendale Ave Pedestrian Improvements
- B-6 Convert Mill St. Bridge to a Pedestrian Bridge
- C-2 Cedar & Exchange Bike/Ped Improvements + Two-way Conversion
- C-6 Euclid Ave. Pedestrian Improvements
- D-2 Vernon Odom Blvd. Bike/Ped Improvements
- D-8 Bartges Green Street

**COMPLEMENTARY SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS**

- C-1 Exchange St. Commercial Corridor Development
- D-1 Vernon Odom Blvd. Commercial Corridor Development
- T-3 Affordable neighborhood retail space for small businesses
- T-7 Affordable and flexible office, incubator or commercial space to incubate entrepreneurship
- T-1 Small business loans and funding for investment in business expansion

# How Has Community Input Shaped the “Strengthen East-West Corridors” Strategy?



At every stage of engagement, residents emphasized that repairing the harm of the Innerbelt requires physically reconnecting what was once divided. Community members consistently pointed to east-west corridors, particularly historic routes like Wooster Ave. (now Vernon Odom Blvd.), which were erased during urban renewal, as critical places for reinvestment.

Through Open House #1 and subsequent conversations, participants called for stronger, safer connections across the city: making Akron more walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-accessible for everyone. By connecting with Akron’s Great Streets

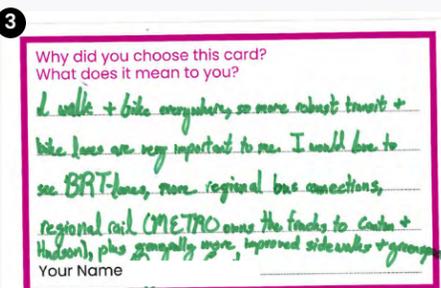
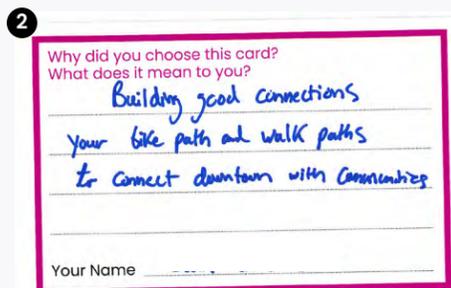
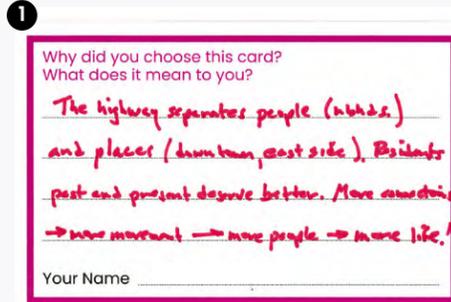
Initiative, community members envisioned corridors that support neighborhood vitality, local businesses, and everyday mobility.

The East-West Corridors strategy responds directly to this vision by focusing on complete streets improvements, better bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and new opportunities to cross over the Innerbelt. Projects such as the proposed Mill Street pedestrian bridge, which converts an underutilized vehicular road into a new pedestrian crossing over the Innerbelt, demonstrate how these investments can begin to reconnect neighborhoods across Akron.



## “PRINCIPLES & GOALS”

Community feedback from Open House #1 helped guide both the location and type of mobility investments in the plan, ranging from reinvestment in key corridors to upgraded bike lanes and safer pedestrian crossings.



## PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

Projects are proposed on many major roads across Akron. Some projects, like Vernon Odom Blvd. support the restoration of historic neighborhood corridors, while others focus on creating safer pedestrian experience.

- A-3 Market St.
- B-5 Center St.
- B-10 Glendale Ave.
- B-6 Mill St.
- C-1 Exchange St.
- C-2 Cedar St.
- C-6 Euclid Ave.
- D-1 Vernon Odom Blvd.
- D-2 Vernon Odom Blvd.
- D-8 Bartges Street



During Open House #1, 200 community members weighed in on the Principles & Goals that would guide the planning process. Community members wrote on cards what the future of the Innerbelt should look like, and many responses focused on developing safer, more accessible Innerbelt crossings to reconnect neighborhoods and provide access to jobs.

### COMMUNITY QUOTES

- 1 “The highway separates people (neighborhoods) and places (downtown, east side). Residents past and present deserve better. More connections -> more movement -> more people -> more life!”
- 2 “Building good connections (using) bike paths and walk paths to connect downtown with communities.”
- 3 “I walk and bike everywhere, so more robust transit and bike lanes are very important to me. I would love to see BRT-lanes, more regional bus connections, regional rail (METRO owns the tracks to Canton and Hudson) plus generally more improved sidewalks and green space.”

STRATEGY

# Connect Open Spaces

Connect historically impacted neighborhoods to the city's network of great outdoor open spaces and the social, health, and economic benefits this network brings



Akron has an exceptional network of outdoor spaces – Summit Lake to the south, Cascade Valley and the scenic areas along the Little Cuyahoga River to the north, the revitalized Lock 3 Park in the center, and the Towpath Trail tying many of these places together. In recent years, many of these destinations have seen new investment and, in turn, have helped catalyze additional development around them.

The Innerbelt disrupted this system by fragmenting connections and limiting access from West Akron neighborhoods to these valuable spaces. As an act of repair, this strategy proposes ways to reconnect the open space network and improve neighborhood access to it, creating more opportunities for health and wellness, social connection, and equitable economic development for communities historically impacted by Urban Renewal and the Innerbelt.

## What Are Key Elements of This Strategy ...

### KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

#### ENVIRONMENT & OPEN SPACE

#### Enhanced Connections to Key Open Spaces

Create clearer, more accessible paths between neighborhoods and existing parks and trails, with bicycle and pedestrian improvements, better wayfinding, and more welcoming access points

#### New & Improved Public Spaces

Leverage redevelopment in the Innerbelt area to enhance and deliver new high-quality public spaces

#### HISTORY & CULTURE

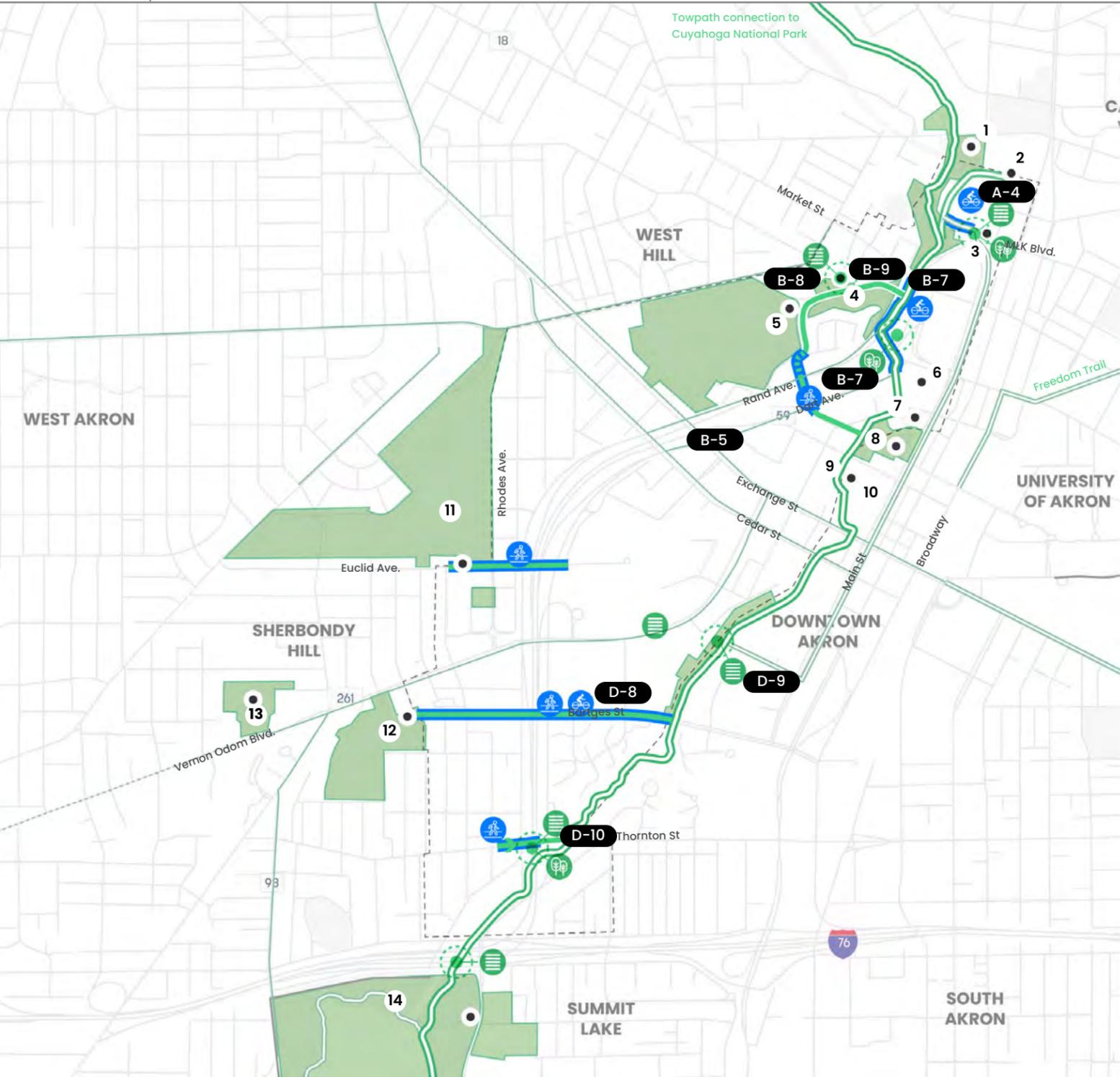
#### Cultural Placemaking

Turn public spaces into stages for cultural placemaking that honors history and celebrates Akron's Black and contemporary culture. Through public art and temporary activations, parks and trails near the Innerbelt can commemorate the neighborhoods and people displaced by Urban Renewal while uplifting the creativity of today's residents, making these spaces feel welcoming and "owned" by the community.

## ... and How Do They Address Community Goals for Repair?

### HOW IT RELATES TO COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

- 08 Develop and maintain public spaces that are safe, welcoming, and accessible to residents
- 09 Improve access to Akron's network of trails from neighborhoods that were cut off by the Innerbelt
- 11 Create a safe and comfortable environment for walking, biking, taking transit, and getting around without a car
- 13 Memorialize the harm done by Urban Renewal
- 14 Create opportunities to celebrate Akron's contemporary identity and cultural creativity



Towpath connection to Cuyahoga National Park

# What Will Connecting Open Spaces Look Like?



## KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

- █ **Enhanced Connections to Key Open Spaces**
- ⋮ **Improved Gateways & Crossings**
- 🚲 🚶 **Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements**

## 🌱 New & Improved Public Spaces

## 🕒 Cultural Placemaking

## PLACE-BASED PROJECTS

- A-4 Improved Main & MLK Intersection + Beech St. Gateway
- B-5 Center St. Bike/Ped Improvements
- B-8 Glendale Steps Improvement
- D-8 Bartges Green Street
- D-9 Falor St Gateway

- B-7 Temporary Planting of Former Innerbelt Right-of-way
- B-9 Improvements to Glendale Park & Glendale Ave.
- D-10 West Thornton Gateway

## COMPLEMENTARY SOCIAL IMPACT TOOLS

- T-29 Temporary Open Space Activation and Public Art Programs

### MAP KEY

- █ Towpath Trail
- ▬ Protected Bike Lanes & Trails
- ▬ On-street Bike Lanes
- █ Existing Parks & Open Spaces

### KEY OPEN SPACE ASSETS

- 1 Cascade Locks Park
- 2 CVSR Station
- 3 Hotel Mathews Monument
- 4 Glendale Steps
- 5 Glendale Cemetery
- 6 Cascade Plaza
- 7 Lock 4 Park
- 8 Lock 3 Park
- 9 Lock 2 Park
- 10 7 17 Credit Union Ballpark
- 11 Akron Zoo / Perkins Park
- 12 Lane Field Park
- 13 Sherbondy Hill Park
- 14 Summit Lake Northshore Park

STRATEGY

# Activate Innerbelt-Adjacent Assets

Activate under-utilized land and properties adjacent to the Innerbelt for redevelopment, and leverage the redevelopment to benefit and create value for communities impacted by the Innerbelt

Urban Renewal and the construction of the Innerbelt left many parcels of land vacant or underused along its edges. Over time, the city's development turned its back on the highway, leaving much of this land's potential untapped.

As the future of the Innerbelt is reimagined, these sites become



critical assets for repair. This strategy focuses on activating Innerbelt-adjacent land and properties for redevelopment in ways that create directly community-serving uses, such as affordable housing, community facilities, and neighborhood-scale businesses; and capture market-driven value from new development and channel it into reparative reinvestment in the neighborhoods most impacted by the Innerbelt.

## What Are Key Elements of This Strategy ...

### KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

#### ☑ Leverage Public Land for Development

Use publicly-owned land around the Innerbelt for development that aligns with the community goals – affordable housing, employment, and community and cultural uses

#### ☑ Encourage Mission-aligned Private Development

While the City of Akron doesn't control many of the land assets around the Innerbelt, it can encourage and incentivize private development that is aligned with the community's goals

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

#### ☑ Capture Value from Development & Channel It into the Community

Given the relatively weak real estate market in Akron today, most of the land under and around the Innerbelt doesn't have financial value that can be immediately realized. However, the Master Plan puts in place structures to ensure that value from future development – should it be realized – can be channeled towards reparative investments in historically impacted neighborhoods.

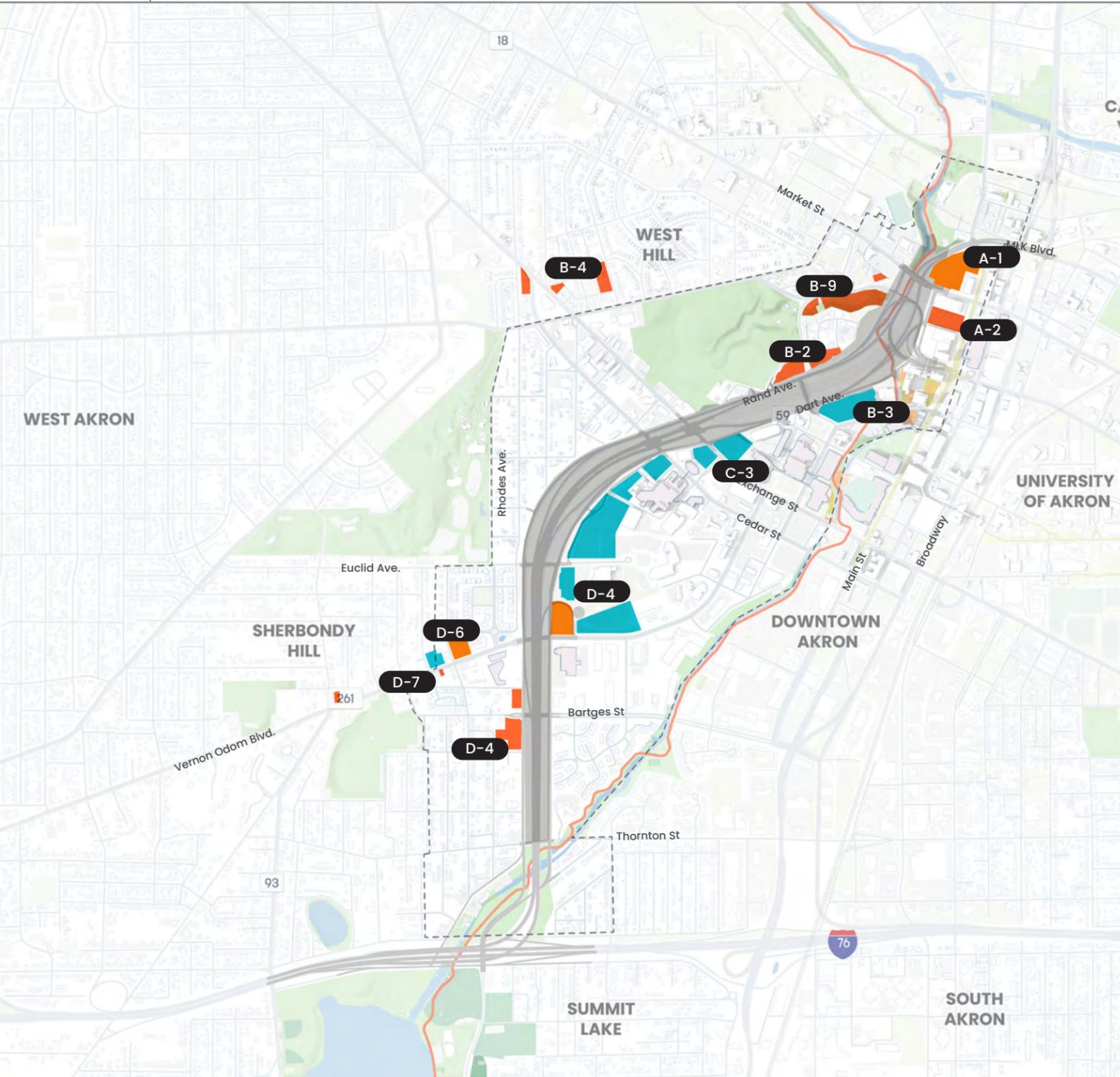
## ... and How Do They Address Community Goals for Repair?

### HOW IT RELATES TO COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

*These developments can create much-needed affordable and market-rate housing and spaces to attract jobs, incubate small businesses, and host community and cultural uses, fulfilling a wide variety of community goals such as:*

- 06 Promote new supply of mixed-income rental housing.
- 07 Promote new supply of mixed-income homeownership options, and broaden pathways to homeownership
- 03 Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses
- 16 Support community and non-profit spaces that provide recreational, educational, health, and wellness activities to the community, particularly the youth

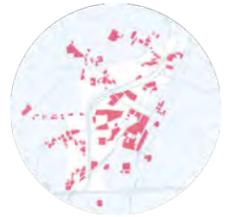
- 01 Leverage the former Innerbelt land to create value, and ensure that the value is re-invested back into the community



**MAP KEY**

- Asset - City of Akron-owned
- Assets Owned by Other Public-sector Entities
- Privately-owned Assets (Major Institutions & Employers)
- Innerbelt Right-of-way

# What Will Activating Innerbelt-Adjacent Assets Look Like?



**DEVELOPMENT SITES**

See *Place-based Projects Catalogue* (page 124) for suggested uses and design guidelines on each site

**IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS**

## Leverage Public Land for Development

These sites are controlled by City of Akron and other public-sector entities. When owned by the City, it can exert greater control over what gets developed.

- Owned by City of Akron
  - A-2 50 Main St. City-owned Parking Lot
  - B-2 Wills Ave. Parking Lot
  - B-4 Balch St. Fitness Center Sites
  - B-9 Glendale Park
  - D-4 Rhodes Ave. & Bartges St. Site
- Owned by Other Public-sector Entities
  - A-1 Akron Public School Site (Board of Education)
  - D-4 ODOT Loop Ramp Parcel (ODOT)
  - D-6 AMHA Site on Vernon Odom Blvd. Infill (AMHA)

A variety of implementation tools are needed to not only enable these developments, but also ensure that they happen in a way that is consistent with the community goals and long-term vision of this Master Plan. Examples of these include:

- Form-based zoning**
- Community Advisory Group**
- Updates to the City land disposition process**
- Innerbelt TIF District**

For more details, see "Implementation Tools," page 102.

## Encourage Mission-aligned Private Development

Though the City does not control these privately owned sites, it can encourage development that is aligned with the goals of the Master Plan.

- Owned by Private Entities
  - B-3 74 Bowery St. Parking Lot
  - C-3 Dart Ave. Parking Lot
  - D-4 AT&T Parcel
  - D-7 Vacant Private Sites on Vernon Odom Blvd.

# Assessing the Development Feasibility of Innerbelt-Adjacent Assets

## Site Conditions Significantly Impact Development Costs

Site preparation is the initial phase of construction, involving readying land for development. Costs depend on site conditions—flat, clear lots with nearby utilities are cheaper to prepare than sloped or wooded sites needing grading and utility extensions. The following identifies factors that influence the cost of site preparation.

**Demolition:** Removing structures, obstacles, vegetation, trees, and rocks can substantially raise site preparation costs.

**Grading and Excavation:** The process of leveling land for development incurs higher costs on heavily sloped sites compared to level sites.

**Soil and Foundation Requirements:** If the soil is unstable, additional structural measures may be necessary, which can increase costs and extend timelines.

**Utility Installation:** The cost of connecting to water, sewer, power, and gas may increase if utility main lines are not located near the property.

**New Streets:** Constructing new streets to access development parcels increases overall costs.

Sites with access to existing roads do not require this expense, resulting in different development costs.

## Site Feasibility Challenges Require a Patient, Phased Approach to Development

As demonstrated by the three example sites (see facing page), the land assets around the Innerbelt have very different site conditions, different site preparation costs, and different levels of development feasibility. This requires us to take a strategic, patient, and phased approach to leveraging these land assets for development. For example, development-ready sites off the Innerbelt – in Sherbondy Hill, the Rhodes Ave. Triangle, and downtown – should be prioritized in the near-term, when market conditions in Akron are relatively weak. Development on the Innerbelt right-of-way itself, which requires significant site preparation, will be a much more long-term undertaking, contingent on future market conditions and the availability of infrastructure dollars.



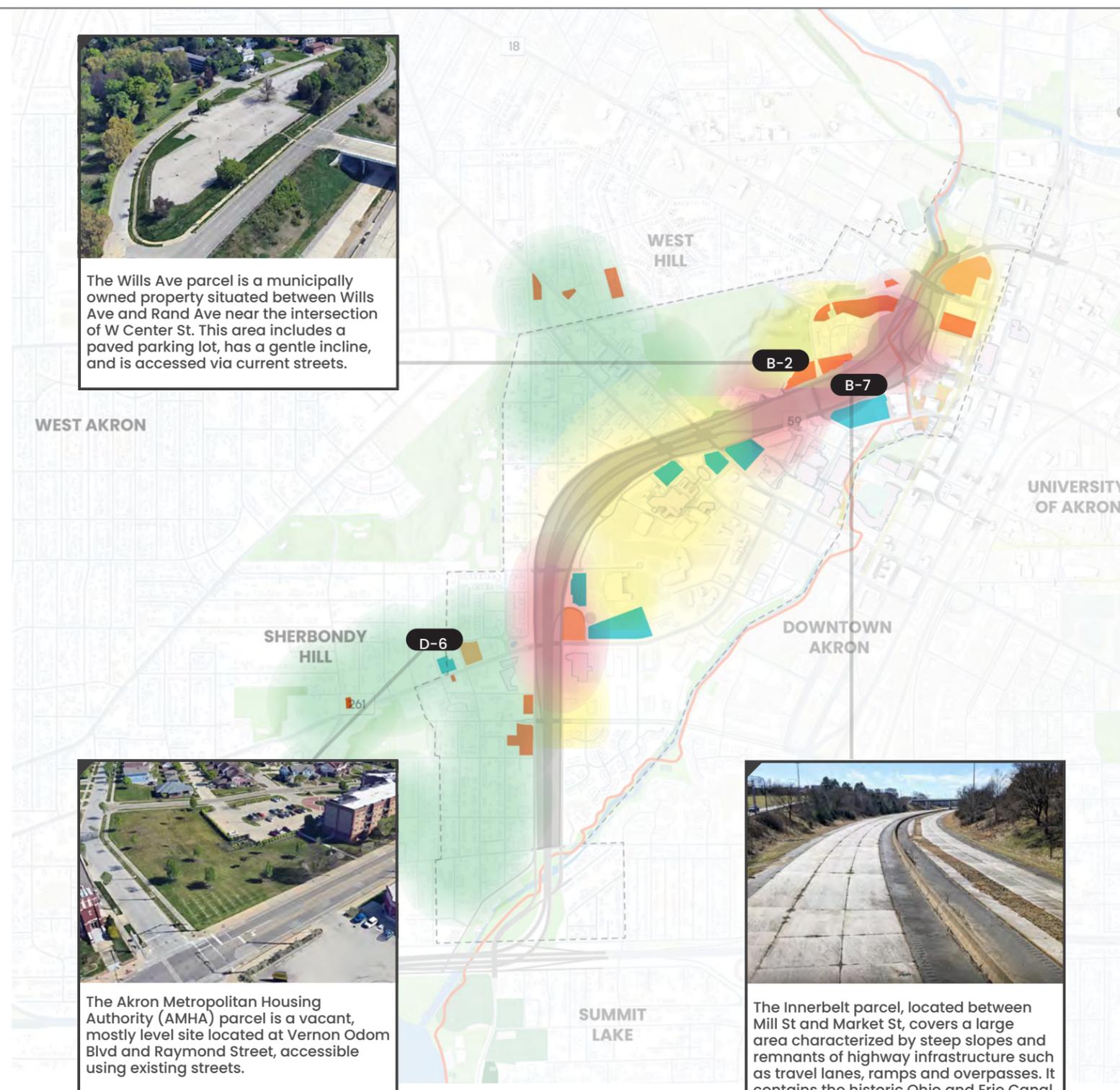
The Wills Ave parcel is a municipally owned property situated between Wills Ave and Rand Ave near the intersection of W Center St. This area includes a paved parking lot, has a gentle incline, and is accessed via current streets.



The Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA) parcel is a vacant, mostly level site located at Vernon Odom Blvd and Raymond Street, accessible using existing streets.



The Innerbelt parcel, located between Mill St and Market St, covers a large area characterized by steep slopes and remnants of highway infrastructure such as travel lanes, ramps and overpasses. It contains the historic Ohio and Erie Canal route and would require new streets for development access.



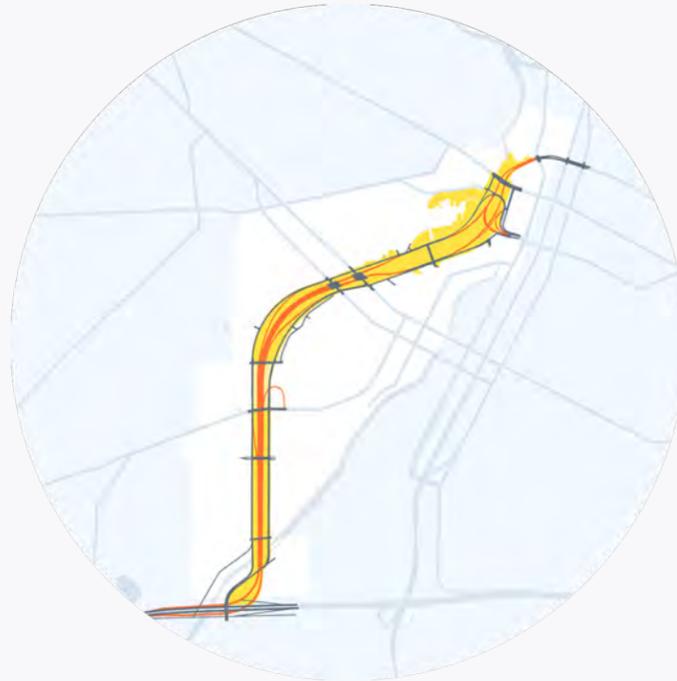
**MAP KEY**

- Low Site Preparation Costs / High Development Feasibility
- Medium Site Costs
- High Site Costs / Low Development Feasibility

## STRATEGY

# Unlock Land Under the Innerbelt

Untangle legacy highway infrastructure, and tap into the value of the land underneath



The land under the Innerbelt – both the ~50 acres under the decommissioned portion north of the Exchange St. already controlled by the City of Akron, and land under the still active southern portion that the City hopes to acquire control of in the future – represents a pool of value collectively owned by Akronites. However, realizing this value will take patient, deliberate, and incremental steps. Carefully undoing the tangle of legacy highway infrastructure, and addressing the challenges

of topography and underground infrastructure for redevelopment will be complex. As a result, redevelopment will take decades of patient, strategic steps. However, small steps can be taken now to turn the former Innerbelt land into a community-serving asset, while teeing up bigger changes down the road.

## What Are Key Elements of This Strategy ...

### KEY ELEMENTS OF THIS STRATEGY

#### ☑ Remove Unnecessary Highway Infrastructure

Decommission and remove unnecessary highway infrastructure to eliminate physical barriers and promote accessibility

#### ☑ Support Redevelopment of the Right-of-way

Support future development and infill construction with a reimagined road network that connects seamlessly into surrounding neighborhoods

#### ☑ Enhancing Safety and Connectivity

Enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety and comfort around the Innerbelt, with both short- and long-term improvements

## ... and How Do They Address Community Goals for Repair?

### HOW IT RELATES TO COMMUNITY GOALS FOR REPAIR

These actions underpin many of the community's goals for repair across housing, economic opportunities, mobility, and open space:

#### HOUSING

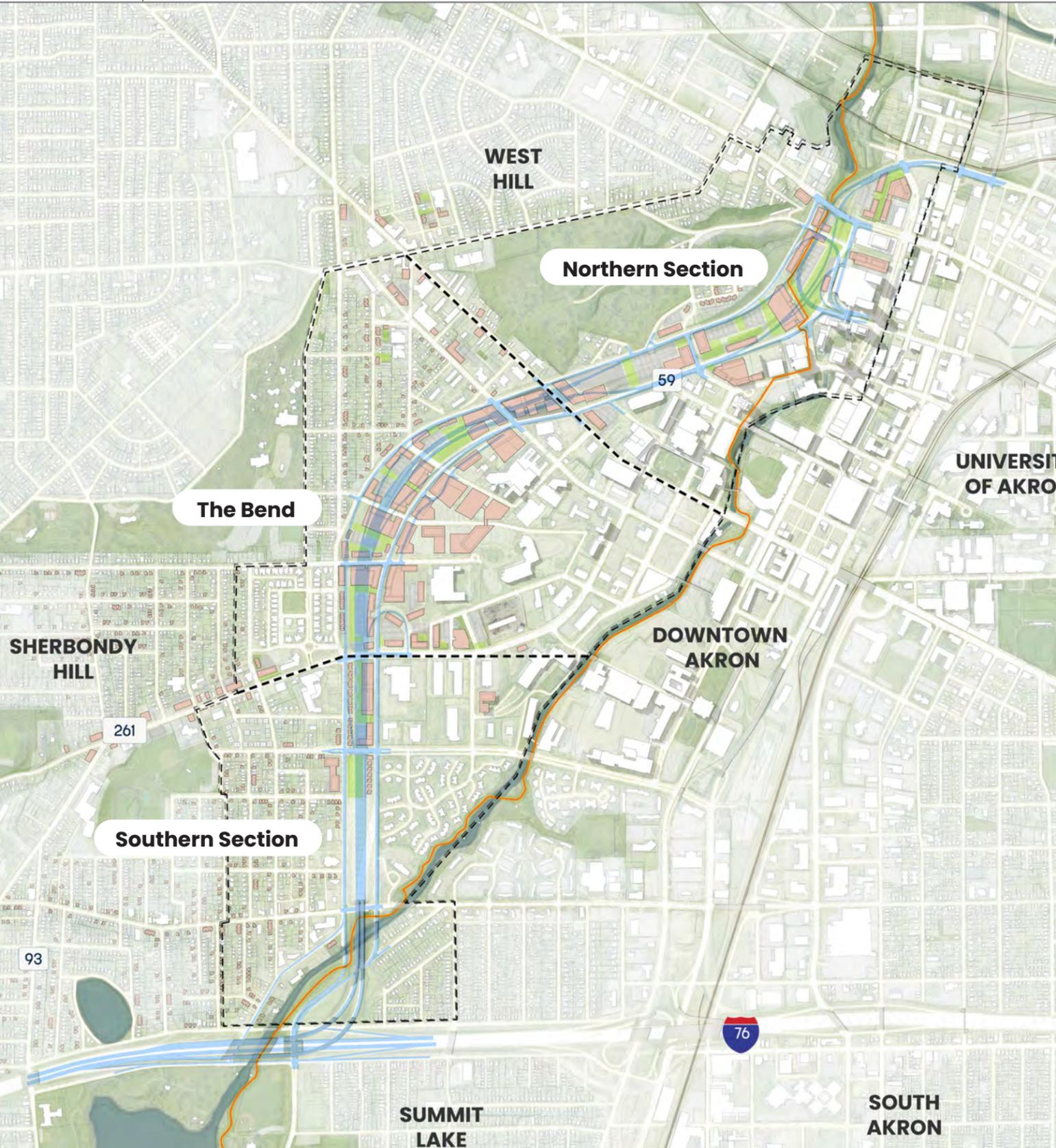
Redeveloping the former Innerbelt land creates a unique opportunity to build new affordable housing in the heart of the city. By building where urban renewal once removed homes, this initiative not only restores lost neighborhoods but also provides an opportunity to right past injustices. Pairing redevelopment with strong policies that guarantee affordability, accessibility, and prioritize descendants of those displaced by the Innerbelt ensures these efforts truly repair and strengthen the community.

#### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Freed-up former Innerbelt land offers space for commercial development, local businesses, and job-generating uses that prioritize community benefit. By creating quality, accessible jobs and reinvesting financial returns locally, this strategy helps build economic opportunities in Akron that can be accessed by communities once cut off by the Innerbelt.

#### MOBILITY

Removing legacy highway infrastructure can reconnect neighborhoods and make it safer and easier to move between them. Rebuilding the local street grid in place of the Innerbelt restores the fabric of the city that split during urban renewal, physically repairing the divided city grid and reconnecting communities to downtown Akron.



**30+ YEAR VISION FOR THE INNERBELT RIGHT-OF-WAY  
(WITH THE INNERBELT OVERLAID ON TOP)**

# What Will the Unlocked Former Innerbelt Land Look Like?

## Northern Section

**TIMELINE FOR FULL VISION**

🕒🕒🕒 30+ Years

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

The City of Akron controls the approximately 50 acres of Innerbelt right-of-way in the northern section, and is positioned to start some low-cost, near-term improvements.

The Innerbelt land in this area is under City control, presenting opportunities for future redevelopment. Nevertheless, existing infrastructure limitations and the challenging grade changes pose obstacles to near-term redevelopment efforts. Investments in this section will focus on repurposing or eliminating Innerbelt ramps, service roads, and flyovers, while also mitigating grade changes and steep slopes to enhance both vehicular and pedestrian connectivity across the former Innerbelt, and anticipate future development in the long term if and when market conditions become more favorable to redevelopment.

## The Bend

**TIMELINE FOR FULL VISION**

🕒🕒🕒 15-30 Years

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

This section of the Innerbelt is still an active highway under the control of ODOT. As a result of this Master Plan, the City will start active investigations to decommission this portion of the Innerbelt and acquire site control.

The relatively level terrain of the Innerbelt in this section creates the most immediate opportunities for redevelopment. The Master Plan envisions decommissioning the Innerbelt and introducing a regular street grid that serves both vehicular and pedestrian connections across the former Innerbelt. This new street grid creates development parcels that provide growth options for major hospitals and institutions to the east, and community-serving uses to the west.

Dart Ave. would become the primary north-south route to downtown, with increased traffic managed through multimodal street design and traffic calming measures. North of Vernon Odom Blvd., Rand Ave. would function primarily as a neighborhood street, while its southern segment could be an alternative route to Dart Ave.

## Southern Section

**TIMELINE FOR FULL VISION**

🕒🕒🕒 30+ Years

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT**

This section of the Innerbelt is still an active highway under the control of ODOT. As a result of this Master Plan, the City will start active investigations to decommission this portion of the Innerbelt and acquire site control.

This section of the Innerbelt is adjacent to the communities that have historically borne the brunt of the highway's impact. Throughout the process, these communities have expressed a desire for the full decommissioning of this section of the Innerbelt and its redevelopment into community serving uses. The Master Plan envisions this future. Due to uncertainties in the decommissioning timeline and market conditions, this vision will likely extend far into the future.

Decommissioning of the Innerbelt will also require addressing the interchange with I-76. The strategy to connect to I-76 should remain flexible as the timeline and outcomes remain uncertain. Establishing a full interchange with I-76 is not expected to significantly impact land uses while directing traffic to Dart Ave would position it as the main route to the north and downtown Akron. West Thornton St would remain unchanged, with a potential new connection over to Dart Ave.

## How To Unlock the Innerbelt: A Phased, Incremental Approach

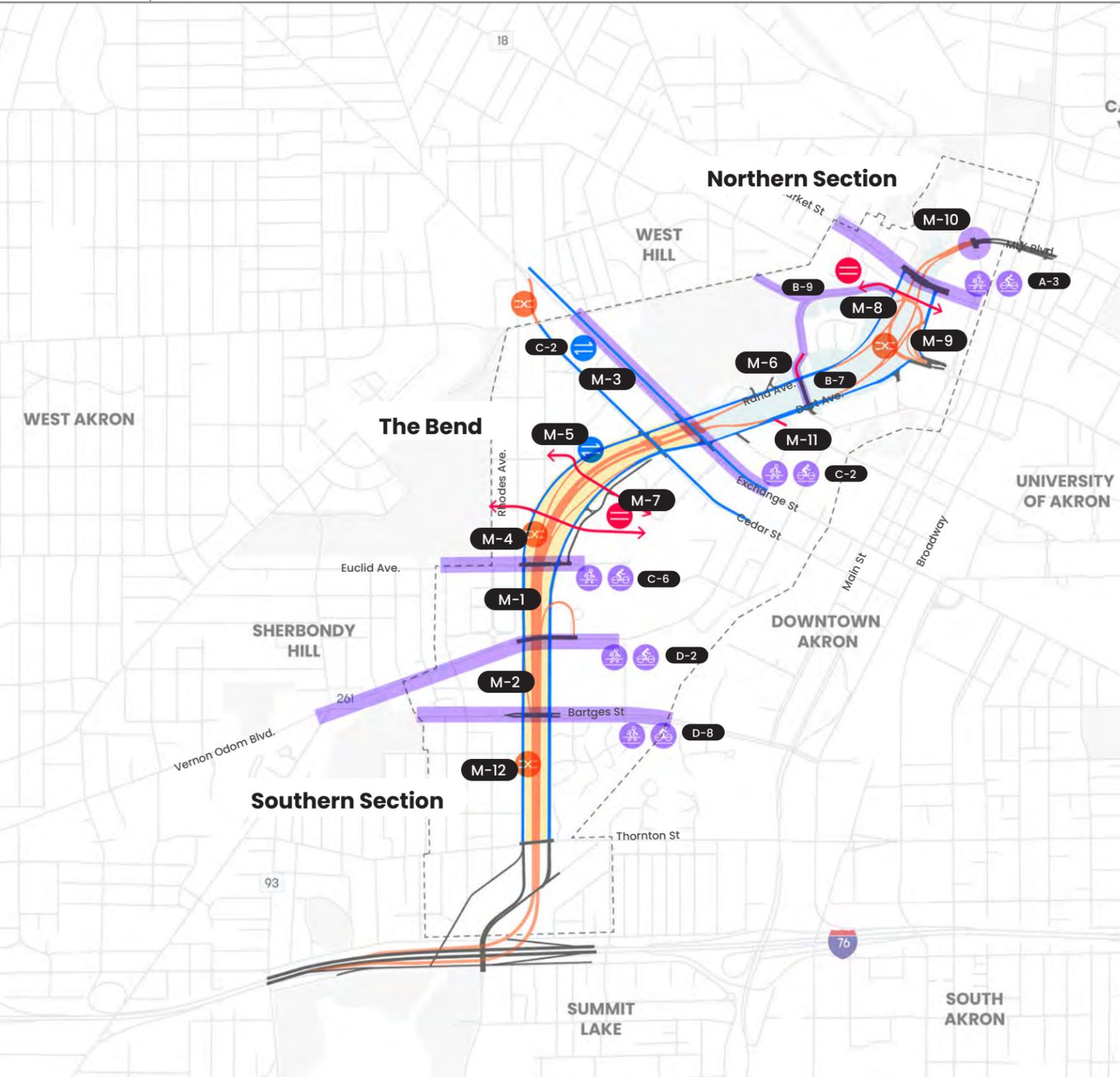
The 30+ year vision for the Innerbelt land aims to fully reconnect it with its surroundings. Given the magnitude of this work, the vision will not happen overnight, but rather requires a phased, incremental roadmap.

The roadmap to unlocking the land underneath the Innerbelt is designed to begin with studies and short-term improvements, followed sequentially by work on the Bend, then the northern right-of-way, and finally the southern portion. This phased approach ensures each project builds upon previous efforts, supporting a coherent and effective transformation of the Innerbelt and surrounding land. While this roadmap is designed for flexibility and adaptability, it is important to recognize that shifting market conditions and economic uncertainties may influence the timing, scope, and implementation of the projects outlined in this Master Plan.

### Conceptual Roadmap

The phased implementation plan outlined on the following pages provides a roadmap for the transformation of Akron's Innerbelt, detailing key actions and milestones over the coming decades to ensure a coordinated and effective redevelopment process. The projects are organized by Short-term (1-5 years); Medium-term (5-15 years); and Long-term (15-30 years) projects. Key projects are described below. A full description of the projects is included in the following pages and the Place-based Projects Catalog (see page 124).





**MAP KEY**

- Decommissioning & Removal
- Conversion to Two-way Street
- New Road Connections
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements
- Innerbelt Right-of-way Controlled by the City
- Innerbelt Right-of-Way Controlled by ODOT  
*The City will work to acquire control after the Master Plan process*

**CONCEPTUAL ROADMAP**

**SHORT-TERM**  
1-5 YEARS

Short-term steps focus on technical studies to enable future highway decommissioning and short-term, low-cost pedestrian improvements

**MEDIUM-TERM: THE BEND**  
5-15 YEARS

Medium-term focus is on unlocking the innerbelt at the Bend, where there is the greatest potential and feasibility for redevelopment

**MID- TO LONG-TERM: THE NORTHERN SECTION**  
15-30 YEARS

Next focus is on the northern innerbelt right-of-way: removing highway ramps and preparing the site for potential future development

**LONG-TERM: THE SOUTHERN SECTION**  
15-30+ YEARS

In the long-term, the focus is on decommissioning and redeveloping the southern section

**PROJECTS TO UNLOCK THE INNERBELT**

Steps to be undertaken to unlock the innerbelt

**RELATED PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**

Other place-based projects that are off the innerbelt, but should be undertaken in coordination

01

*Near-term efforts focus on the necessary technical studies to support decommissioning and removal:*

- M-1** Innerbelt Decommissioning Study, Exchange St. to I-76
- M-2** SR-59 Removal Study
- M-3** W. Exchange St. / W. Cedar St. / Rhodes Ave. Triangle Study (pg 63)

- B-6** Convert Mill St. Bridge to a Pedestrian Bridge
- B-7** Temporary Planting of the Northern Innerbelt Right-of-way  
*Short-term Bike/Ped Improvements to:*
- A-3** Market St.
- C-2** Exchange / Cedar St.
- D-2** Vernon Odom Blvd.

02

- M-4** Decommissioning & Demolition of Innerbelt Exchange St. to Vernon Odom Blvd.
- M-5** Convert Rand Ave. and Dart Ave. to Two-way Center St. to Euclid Ave.
- M-6** Connect Locust St. to Center St.
- M-7** Add Bend Cross Streets

- C-2** Cedar & Exchange St. Two-way Conversion
- C-6** Euclid Ave. Pedestrian Improvements



Potential redevelopment of the Bend is enabled by these steps.

03

- M-8** Mill St. Bridge Removal
- M-9** Removal of SR-59 Center St. to Main St.
- M-10** Reconfigure the N. Main St/ Martin Luther King Blvd./ Beech St Intersection
- M-11** Extend State St. to Dart Ave.

- B-9** Improvements to Glendale Ave.

04

- M-12** Decommissioning & Demolition of Innerbelt Vernon Odom Blvd. to I-76

- D-8** Bartges St. "Green Street" Improvements



Redevelopment of the northern and southern sections will happen in the very long-term.

# 01 Unlocking the Innerbelt: Short-term

1-5 YEARS

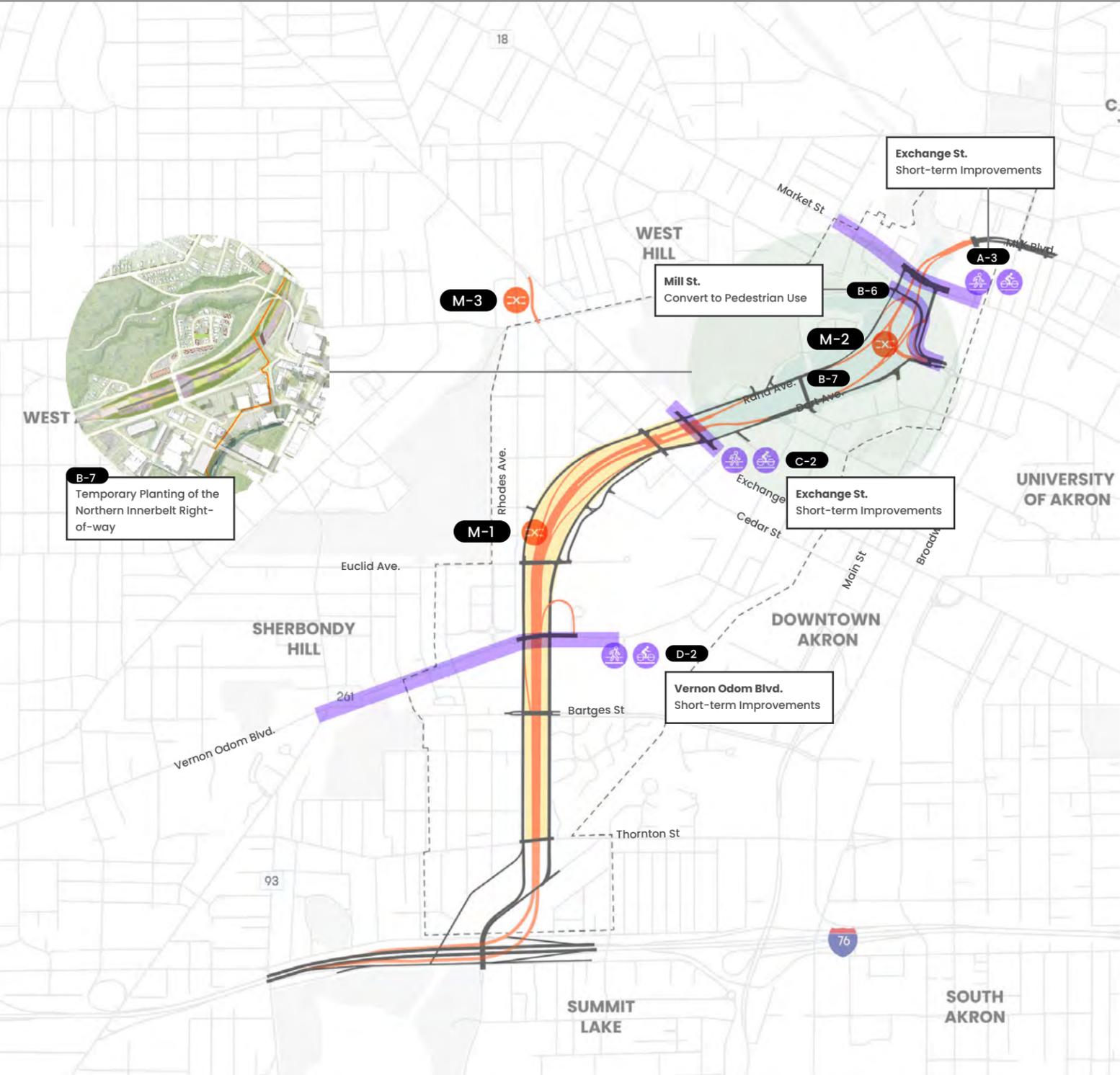
Since the Innerbelt south of Exchange St. is still an active highway, it is essential that the process for decommissioning the remainder of the Innerbelt, including traffic analyses and other relevant studies, commences promptly. These studies are necessary for the City to work with ODOT and FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) to eventually take control of the Innerbelt right-of-way for redevelopment.

Other short-term activities will focus on low-cost pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Market, Vernon Odom Blvd., and Mill St., as well as the temporary planting and activation of the northern section right-of-way.

**TECHNICAL TERMS, EXPLAINED**

**Right-of-way**  
The strip of land reserved for a road and its support needs—like lanes, shoulders, sidewalks, and utilities—where the transportation agency has the legal right to build, operate, and maintain the highway. In this Master Plan, it can be understood as synonymous with “land under the Innerbelt”.

**Decommissioning**  
The process of taking a highway or a segment of it out of service—often removing or repurposing it—and restoring the land for other uses such as local streets, parks, or development. Decommissioning is the first step towards removal.



**MAP KEY**

- Decommissioning & Removal
- Conversion to Two-way Street
- New Road Connections
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements
- Innerbelt Right-of-way Controlled by the City
- Innerbelt Right-of-Way Controlled by ODOT  
*The City will work to acquire control after the Master Plan process*

**M-1**  
**Innerbelt Decommissioning Study from Exchange St. to I-76**

The decommissioning of the southern section of the Innerbelt from Exchange St south to I-76 is a goal of residents and other stakeholders. This is a reasonable proposal as the current infrastructure exceeds traffic needs. An Interstate/Interchange Justification Study (IJS), should be undertaken with ODOT, to decommission the Innerbelt south of Exchange St. The process for determining what ODOT will do with property after decommissioning includes making a case that the infrastructure has served its useful life, potentially eliminating the need to reimburse FHWA for initial construction costs.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ 555

**M-2**  
**SR-59 Removal Study**

To redevelop the northern part of the former Innerbelt, ramps connecting SR 59 to Main St and city parking garages must be removed. Further engineering studies are required to assess the feasibility and traffic distribution impacts of these changes.

SR 59 would be demolished from N. Howard St/N. Main St to Dart/Rand Ave. The Mill St/Downtown Parking exit ramp and garage access ramp would be eliminated. Garage access from Dart Ave. would be redesigned, with other entry points remaining unchanged.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ 555

**M-3**  
**W. Exchange St. / W. Cedar St. / Rhodes Ave. Triangle Study**

Study the closure of Cedar St between Rhodes Ave/Exchange St and Maple St to improve safety, open up land for development, and urbanize the street network. Consider **C-2** as part of the study.

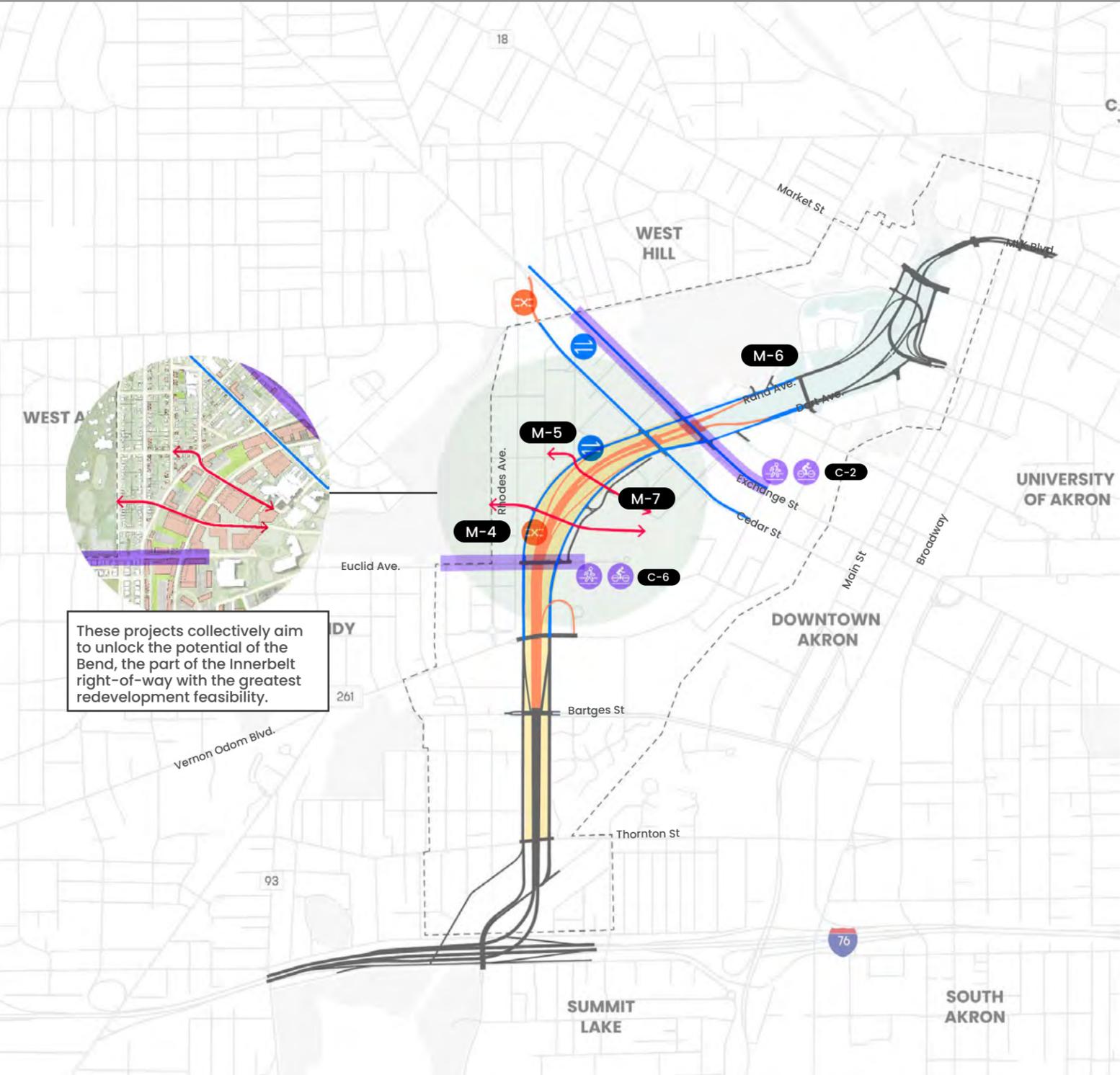
**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ 555

**RELATED PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**  
Other place-based projects that are off the Innerbelt, but should be undertaken in coordination

**B-6** Convert Mill St. Bridge to a Pedestrian Bridge

**B-7** Temporary Planting of the Northern Innerbelt Right-of-way  
*Short-term Bike/Ped Improvements to:*

- A-3** Market St.
- C-2** Exchange / Cedar St.
- D-2** Vernon Odom Blvd.



These projects collectively aim to unlock the potential of the Bend, the part of the Innerbelt right-of-way with the greatest redevelopment feasibility.

**MAP KEY**

- Decommissioning & Removal
- Conversion to Two-way Street
- New Road Connections
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements
- Innerbelt Right-of-way Controlled by the City
- Innerbelt Right-of-Way Controlled by ODOT  
*The City will work to acquire control after the Master Plan process*

02

## Medium-term: The Bend

**MEDIUM-TERM**  
5-15 YEARS

The Bend area has the greatest potential for redevelopment. The land in this area is relatively level and could be relatively easily developed, unlike the northern section that has significant grade changes and requires more upfront investments in site preparation. Institutional uses could expand from the west and residential uses from the east, reconnecting the gap in the urban fabric caused by the Innerbelt.



Conceptual redevelopment of the Innerbelt right-of-way at the Bend, showing how it can both accommodate institutional growth to the west and neighborhood-scale development to the east.

**M-4**

### Demolish the Innerbelt

Exchange St. to Vernon Odom Blvd.

Once decommissioned, the middle portion of the Innerbelt that spans from W. Exchange St. to Vernon Odom Blvd. would be demolished. The land vacated by the removal of the highway would be prepared for new development by adding new cross streets.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$

**M-7**

### Add Cross Streets at the Bend

Once the highway is removed, a grid of new streets will be constructed to reestablish the historic street connections that were severed when the Innerbelt was constructed. The new streets will make it easier for residents to reach Downtown jobs and amenities. The new street grid will also provide the framework for infill development.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$

**M-5**

### Convert Rand Ave. and Dart Ave. to Two-Way Traffic

Dart Ave. will be converted into a 3- to 5-lane, two-way street from W. Center St. to Euclid Ave. It will serve as an active, arterial street, designed to support pedestrian-friendly development on both sides, and incorporate features that encourage walking, social interaction, and economic vitality.

West of the Innerbelt, Rand Ave. and Rhodes Ave. will also be converted to two-way and serve as secondary arterial roads and operate as neighborhood collector streets. The current on-street bicycle facilities could be removed and replaced with a shared use path on both Dart and Rand Aves. Signal modifications will be required due to the change to two-way traffic flows.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$

**M-6**

### Connect Locust St. to Center St.

Locust St. will be connected to Center St. via a new roadway through the City-owned Wills Ave. parking lot. This work will likely happen in the nearer-term as part of the redevelopment of the parking lot site (Project B-2). This street extension will create a more direct connection from the West Hill and Glendale neighborhoods to downtown. In the short-term, this connection could be accomplished with a sidewalk only.

**ESTIMATED COST**

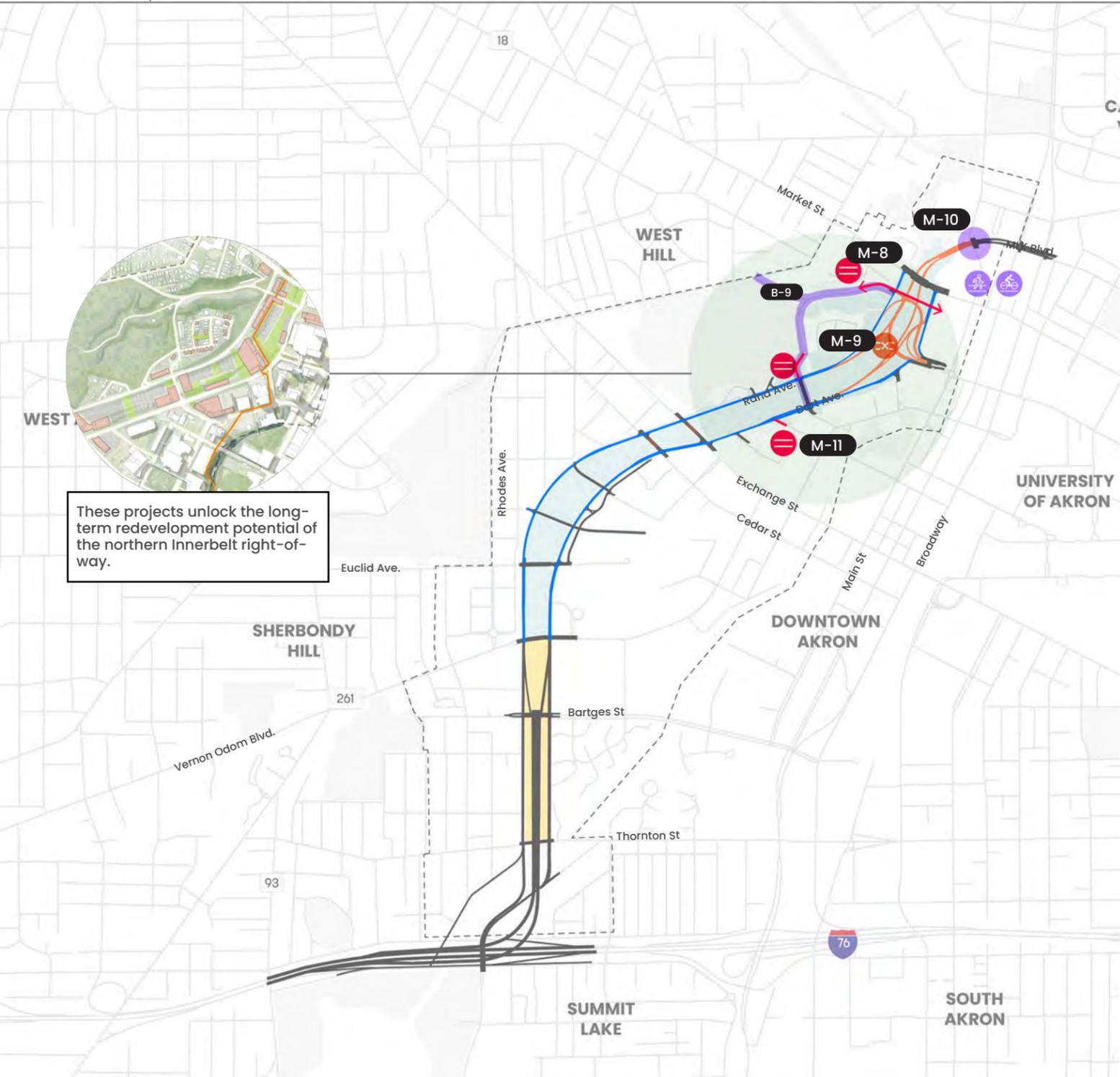
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**RELATED PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**

**C-2** Cedar & Exchange St. Two-way Conversion

This project calms traffic and makes it easier to get around the neighborhood. This work should be coordinated with the two-way traffic conversion of Rand Ave. so that traffic signal upgrades can be considered.

**C-6** Euclid Ave. Pedestrian Improvements



These projects unlock the long-term redevelopment potential of the northern Innerbelt right-of-way.

**MAP KEY**

- Decommissioning & Removal
- Conversion to Two-way Street
- New Road Connections
- Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements
- Innerbelt Right-of-way Controlled by the City
- Innerbelt Right-of-Way Controlled by ODOT  
*The City will work to acquire control after the Master Plan process*

## 03 Medium- to Long-Term: the Northern Section

🕒🕒🕒  
**MID- TO LONG-TERM**  
15-30 YEARS

The northern section of the Innerbelt right-of-way is controlled by the City of Akron. Due to steep topography and existing infrastructure, significant site preparation is needed to make this area ready for development. In the short-term, this part of the Innerbelt right-of-way could be improved. In the medium- to long-term, work in this area will focus on removing highway ramps and SR-59, and reintroduce pedestrian connectivity in coordination with potential future development.



Potential redevelopment of the northern Innerbelt right-of-way

### M-8 Mill St. Bridge Removal

The Mill St. bridge would be removed allowing for realignment of Dart Ave. from Mill St. to Market St. From Exchange St to Glendale Ave, Rand Ave. would have one lane in each direction, possibly with dedicated turn lanes. The intent would be to direct through traffic existing SR 59 toward Dart Ave. by connecting the two-way converted Dart Ave. directly to Market St. once the Mill St. Bridge is removed.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ \$ \$ \$

### M-9 Removal of SR-59

Center St. to Main St.

Removal of SR-59 from Center St. to Main St. allows the Innerbelt right-of-way to be used for redevelopment. Changes to traffic flows will be accommodated by Project **M-10**.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ \$ \$ \$

### M-10 Reconfigure the N. Main St/ Martin Luther King Blvd./ Beech St. Intersection

The N. Main St, Martin Luther King Blvd., and Beech St. intersection will be redesigned and reconstructed to support new traffic patterns, improve pedestrian access, and serve as a downtown gateway. The Towpath route would be adjusted to more closely match its original route. Utilities and existing infrastructure related to the canal tunnel will need to be considered in the redesign.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ \$ \$ \$

### M-11 Extend State St. to Dart Ave.

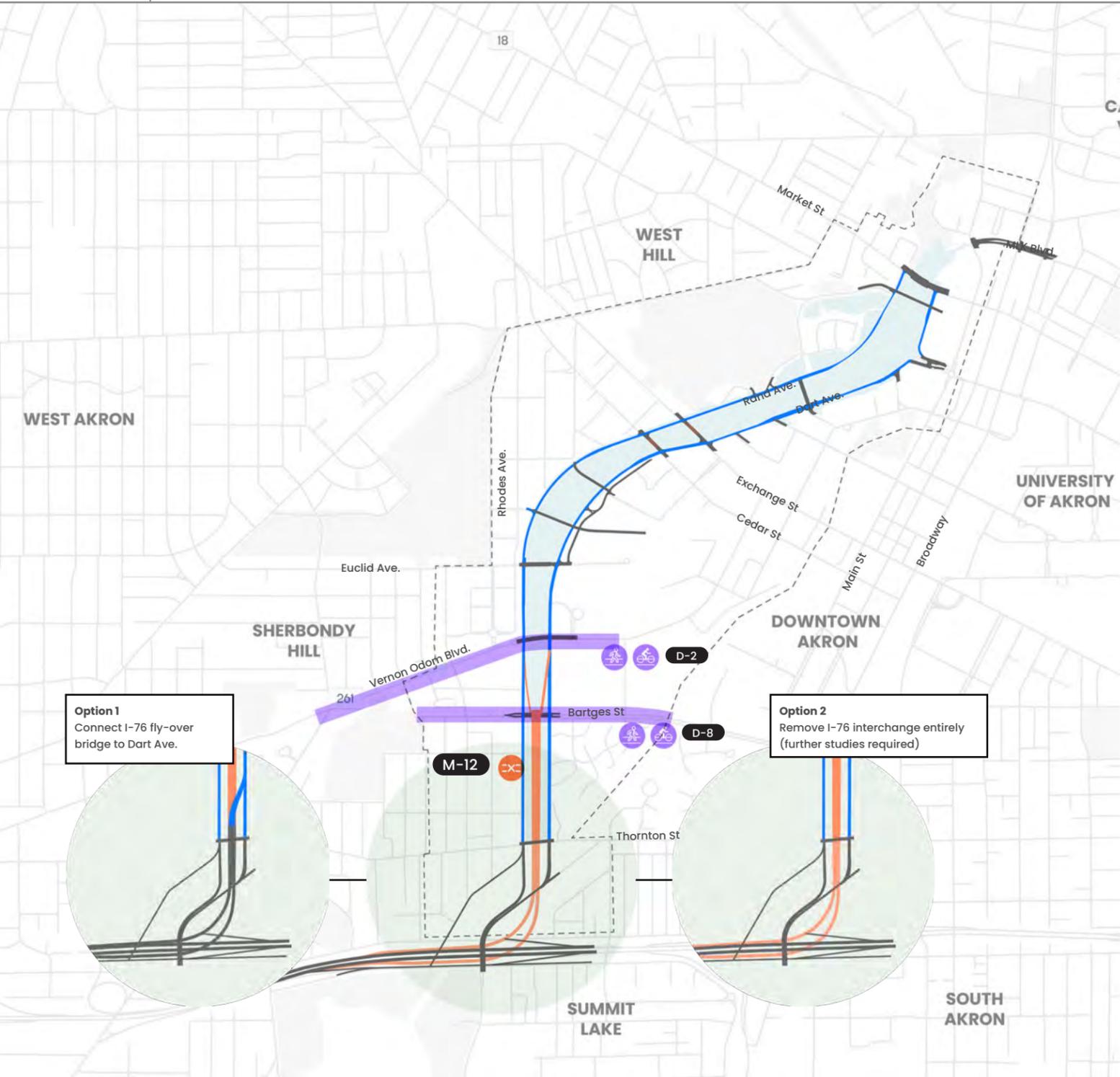
West State St. currently ends in a cul-de-sac east of Dart Ave. The cul-de-sac would be removed and State St. extended west to Dart Ave. The phasing of an extension to Rand Ave. will need to be coordinated with development within the Innerbelt and the conversion of Rand and Dart Ave's. to two-way traffic.

**ESTIMATED COST**  
\$ \$ \$ \$

**RELATED PLACE-BASED PROJECTS**

**B-9** Improvements to Glendale Ave.

Improvements to sidewalk conditions along Glendale Ave. complement these actions, further improving the connection between downtown and West Hill. Glendale Ave. is also a potential route to connect the Maple St. bike lanes to Market St.



## 04 Long-term: Southern Section

LONG-TERM  
15-30+ YEARS

With new projects in place north of Vernon Odom Blvd., the long-term focus moves to the southern section of the Innerbelt and the interchange with I-76. Long-term goals expressed by the community included the full decommissioning of the Innerbelt from Exchange St south to I-76. This is a long-term investment so while there are several alternatives to reimagining this connection it will require flexibility in the final approach. Key projects include:



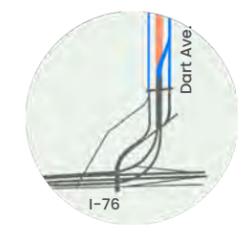
Potential redevelopment of the southern Innerbelt right-of-way

### M-12 Demolish the Innerbelt Vernon Odom Blvd. to I-76

If the southern segment of the Innerbelt is demolished in the future, the reconfigured interchange between I-76 and the Innerbelt would need to be rebuilt to accommodate the new two-way traffic on Rand/Rhodes Ave. and Dart Ave. Since ODOT has made recent investments in the flyover and related interchanges, it will be important to take into account the anticipated useful lifespan of these improvements.

Depending on traffic studies, the interchange could be reconfigured to provide access from I-76 directly to and from Dart Ave. only (Option 1), or the Innerbelt including the flyover, could be removed (Option 2). These actions will need to be reassessed as the timeline advances.

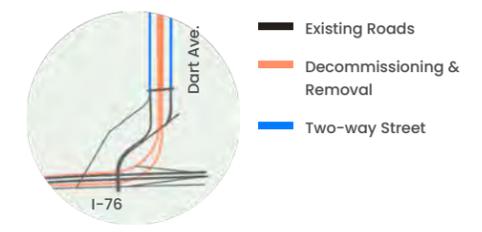
ESTIMATED COST  
\$\$\$\$\$



OPTION 1

Option 1 proposes connecting the fly-over bridges directly to Dart Ave. The current southbound on-ramp to the Innerbelt from Rand Ave. and the northbound exit ramp at Opportunity Parkway would be eliminated. Dart Ave. would become a four-lane, two-way street from Euclid Ave. south to the Innerbelt connection. Rhodes Ave. would be reconfigured as a three-lane section with medians and a shared use path from Vernon Odom Blvd. to W. Thornton St. and would no longer have direct access to I-76.

If the flyovers remain, neighborhood-scale upgrades could be implemented in the Lake Shore Boulevard area. Russel and South could become two-way streets, while preserving the existing towpath trail connection.



OPTION 2

Option 2 considers the removal of the entire Innerbelt, including the improvements to Summit Lake interchange. The Innerbelt and flyovers that connect to I-76 would be demolished. The remaining stretch of Dart Ave. (from Euclid Ave. to Thornton) would be converted to a four-lane, two-way St with a shared use path from Euclid Ave. south to the Innerbelt connection. Rhodes Ave. would be reconfigured as a three-lane section with medians and a shared use path from Vernon Odom Blvd. to W. Thornton St. The final design should preserve the Towpath trail connection in this area and Lake Shore Boulevard will need to balance downtown access with neighborhood requirements.

# How These Strategies Will Transform the Innerbelt Area Near-term (5 Years)

## Invest in the Neighborhoods



Mixed-income, “missing middle” infill housing will be developed on vacant lots owned by the City and Summit County Land Bank in Glendale, Rhodes Triangle, and Sherbondy Hill area.

**B-1 C-5 D-7**



This will be paired with housing repair and anti-displacement programs aimed at keeping housing stable and affordable for existing low- to mid-income residents.

**T-18 T-19 T-20 T-21 T-22 T-23**



Place-based Projects  
See Appendix A for details



Social Impact Tools  
See Appendix B for details



Fresh food access initiatives will begin to address the “grocery desert” in Sherbondy Hill.

**T-30**

## Strengthen East-West Corridors



Short-term improvements (crossings, restriping, and traffic calming) to Market St., Center St., Exchange/Cedar St., Euclid., and Vernon Odom Blvd., and Rhodes Ave. will improve pedestrian and cyclist safety.

**A-3 C-2 C-6 D-2**



Mill St. Bridge will be converted to pedestrian use, further enhancing connections between the Glendale neighborhood and downtown.

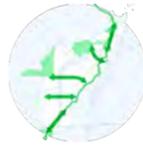
**B-6**



New small-scale retail, including temporary and pop-up retail, will start to appear on Vernon Odom Blvd., supported by a variety of small business support tools.

**C-1 D-1**

## Connect Open Spaces



Temporary planting of the City-owned northern Innerbelt right-of-way will remove the eyesore that is the decommissioned highway, paving the way for long-term transformation.

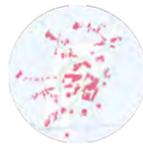
**B-7**



A public art program will bring artists whose work commemorates the history of the Innerbelt and Urban Renewal.

**T-29**

## Activate Innerbelt-Adjacent Assets



Publicly-owned parcels near the Innerbelt will become “first-mover” development sites, hosting mixed-income housing and community spaces.

**A-2 B-2**

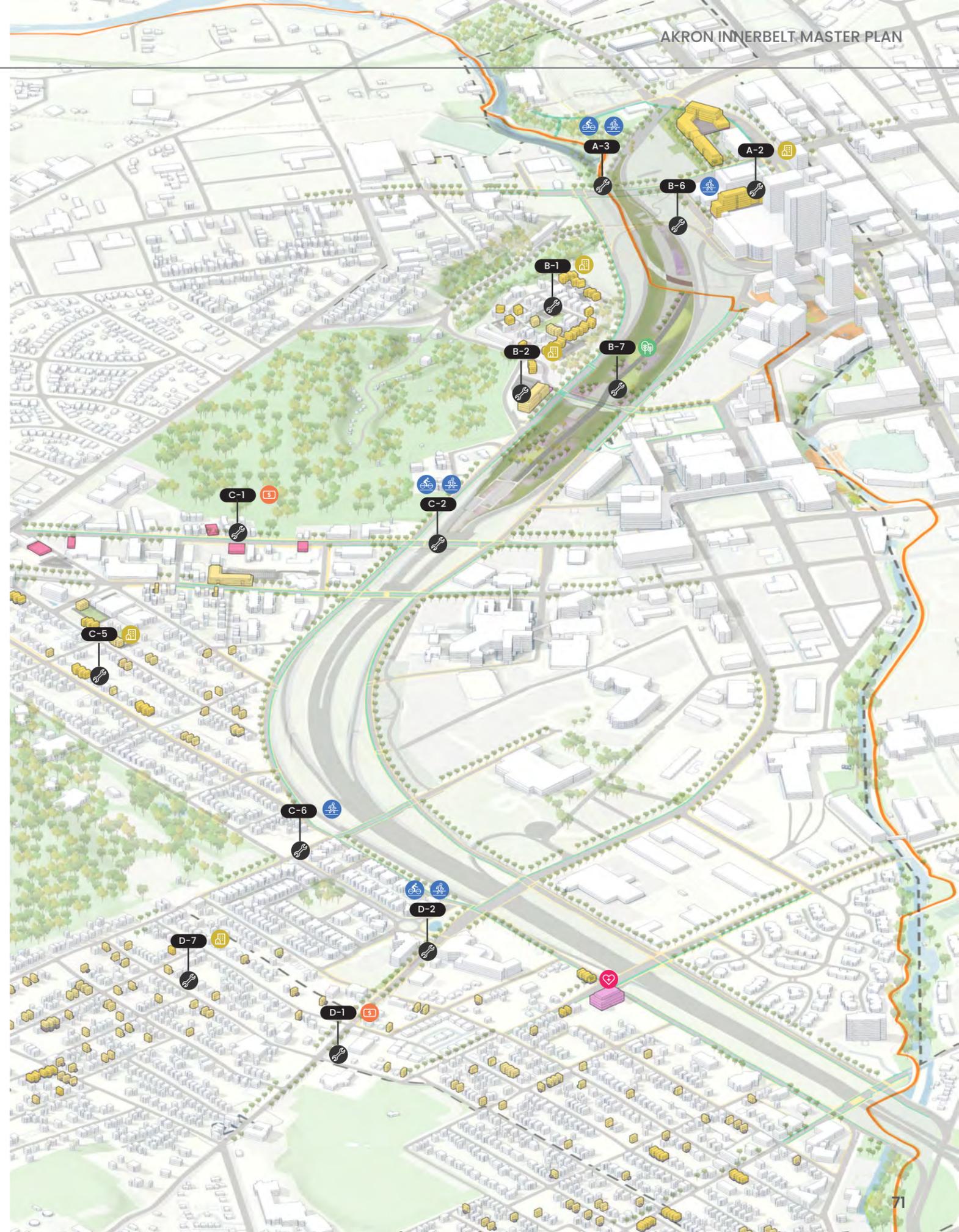


The Form-based Code will have been adopted for the Innerbelt area, guiding all future development.

## Unlock Land Under the Innerbelt



Work will have begun to study the decommissioning and eventual removal of the still active portions of the Innerbelt.



# How These Strategies Will Transform the Innerbelt Area Long-term (30+ Years)

## Invest in the Neighborhoods



Over time, infill housing development will repair the neighborhood fabric in West Hill, Rhodes Triangle, and Sherbondy Hill, bringing new residents and new investments.

**B-1 C-5 D-7**



Existing residents will continue to benefit from these new investments through home repair and anti-displacement programs, new retail and services, and community development vehicles like the Community Reinvestment Fund and Investment Trust.

**T-25 T-27 T-28**

## Strengthen East-West Corridors



Complete streets improvements will transform key east-west streets like Vernon Odom Blvd., Exchange St., and Market St. by adding generous sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and street trees.

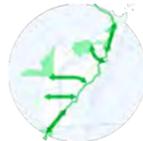
**A-3 C-2 D-2**



These improvements will support the continued revitalization of Vernon Odom Blvd. and Exchange St. as neighborhood retail corridors.

**C-1 D-1**

## Connect Open Spaces



Along "green streets" like Bartges St., West Akron residents can access the Towpath and the city's network of other great public spaces much more easily.

**D-8**

## Activate Innerbelt-Adjacent Assets



Over time, both public and privately-owned vacant land along the Innerbelt will be redeveloped into mixed-income housing and employment and institutional uses. This redevelopment will be guided by the Master Plan and the form-based code to ensure alignment with community vision.

**A-1 B-3 D-5**



Dart and Rand Ave. will be converted from fast-moving, highway-like roads into urban-scaled streets, while new east-west streets across the Innerbelt further restore the lost urban fabric.

**M-5**

## Unlock Land Under the Innerbelt



The currently still active portions of the Innerbelt will be decommissioned, demolished, and redeveloped subject to market and funding conditions.

Place-based Projects  
See Appendix A for details

Social Impact Tools  
See Appendix B for details

**Potential Cumulative Impact**  
Subject to market and funding conditions



**20+**

lots identified for new neighborhood businesses



**4,500+**

potential new homes



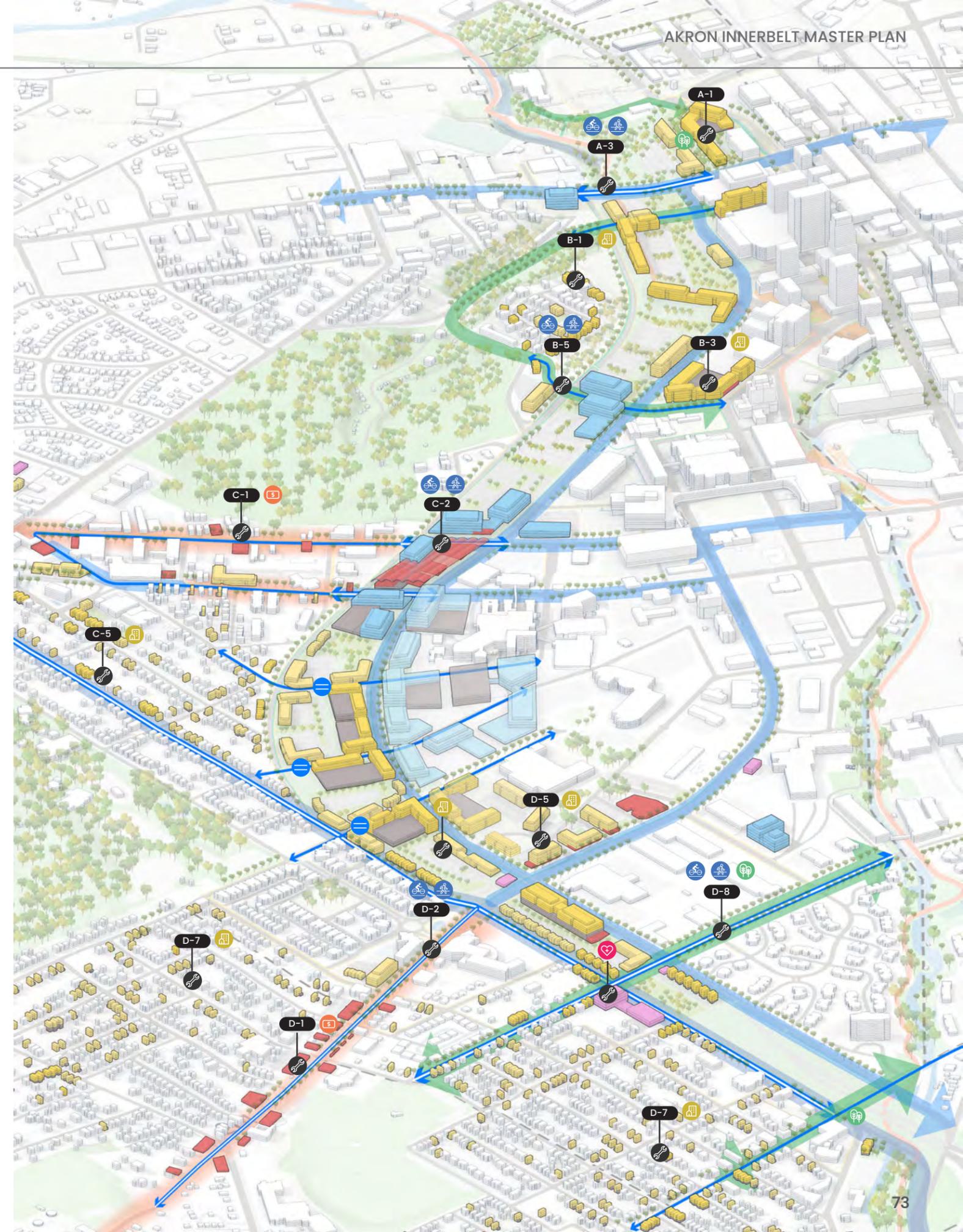
**11**

new and/or improved street connections



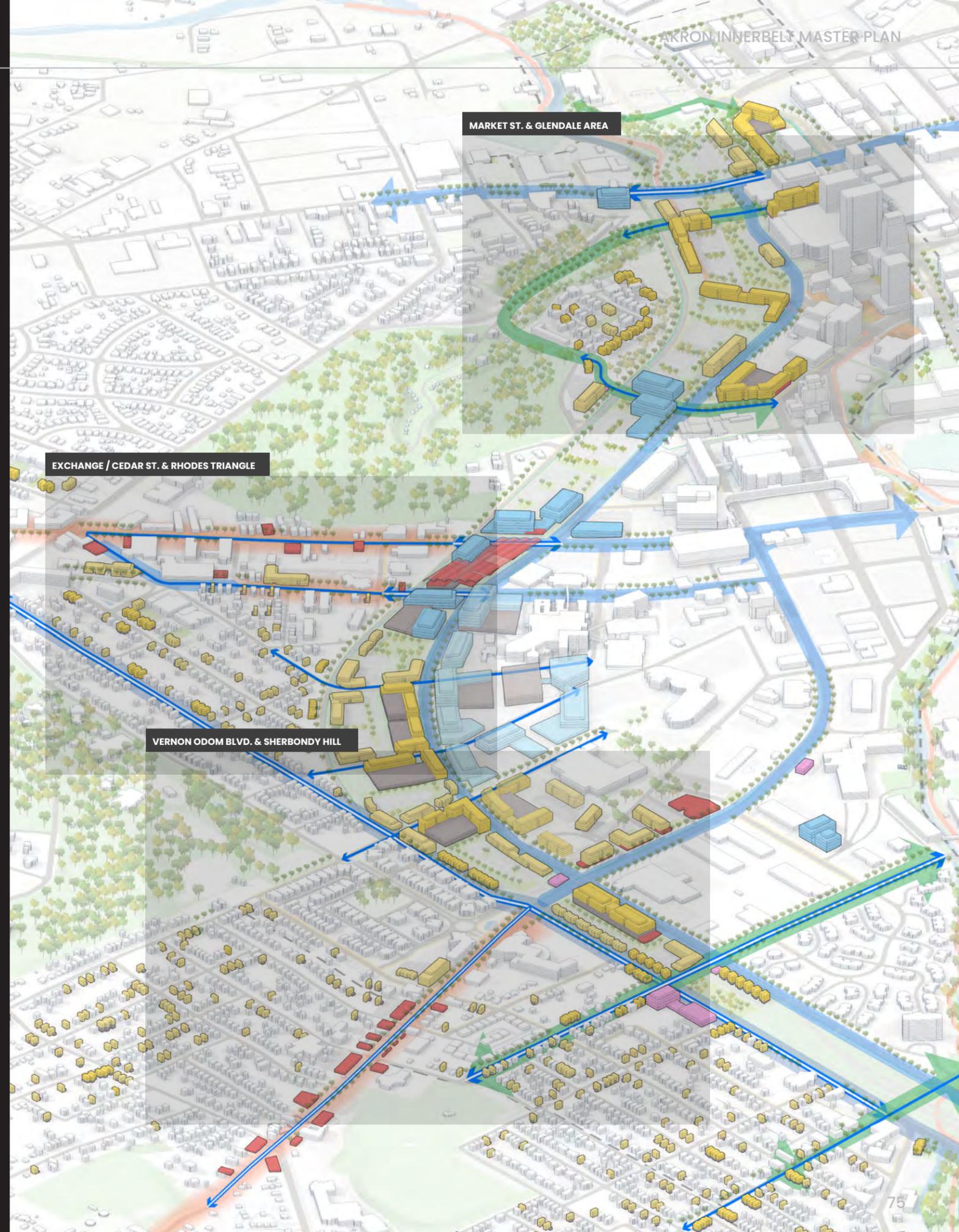
**6**

new connections to parks, plazas, & public spaces



04

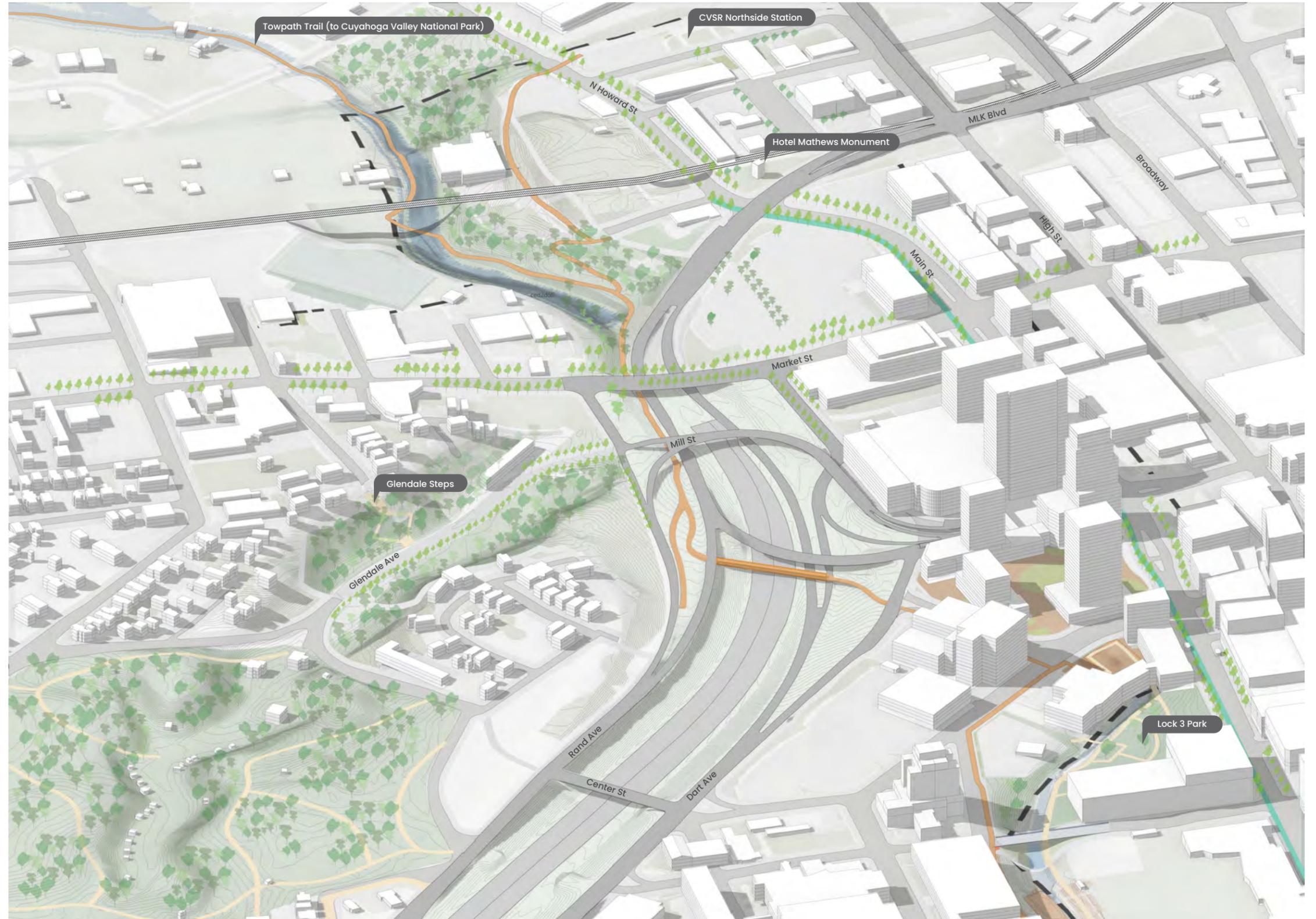
# Visions of Transformed Neighborhoods



## MARKET ST. &amp; GLENDALE AREA

## Market St. & Glendale Area Today

Today, the northern section of the Innerbelt is a tangle of overbuilt and outdated highway infrastructure. The decommissioned highway sits in a ditch that separates the Glendale and West Hill neighborhoods from downtown. Market St. is a large, fast-moving roadway that discourages people from coming downtown on foot or by bike.



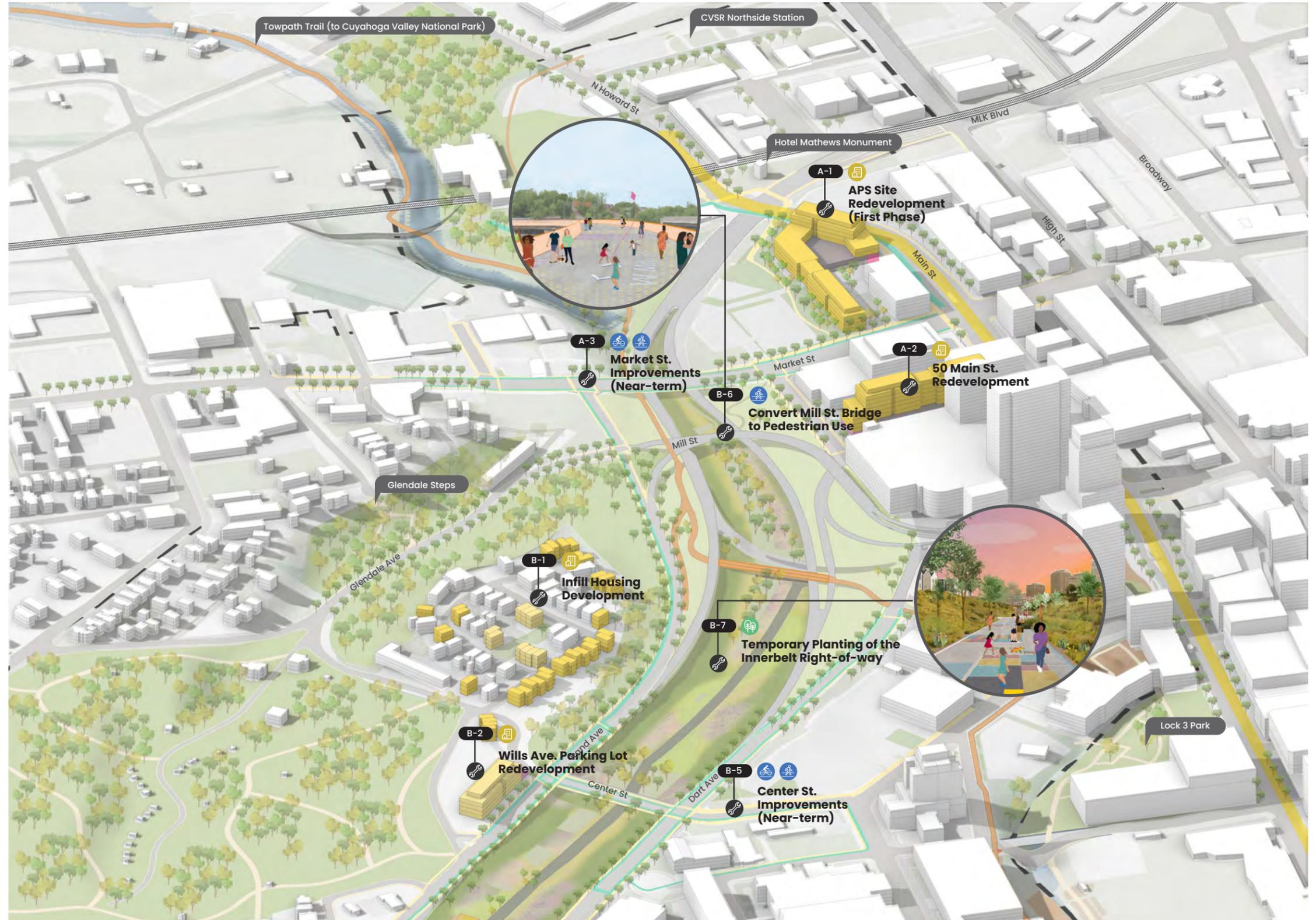
## MARKET ST. &amp; GLENDALE AREA

## Market St. & Glendale Area

### 5 Years

In the near term, new development will start to emerge on City-owned land adjacent to the Innerbelt, providing new mixed-use housing and community-serving uses and starting to repair the neighborhood fabric in Glendale and West Hill. These neighborhoods will become better connected to downtown as a result of short-term, low-cost pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Market St. and Center., as well as the conversion of Mill St. Bridge to pedestrian use.

On the Innerbelt right-of-way itself, temporary planting will have transformed derelict infrastructure into a more aesthetically pleasing landscape, symbolizing the repair of the highway. Here, a public art program will curate rotating art installations that commemorate the history of Urban Renewal and the Innerbelt and celebrate Akron's contemporary cultural creativity.

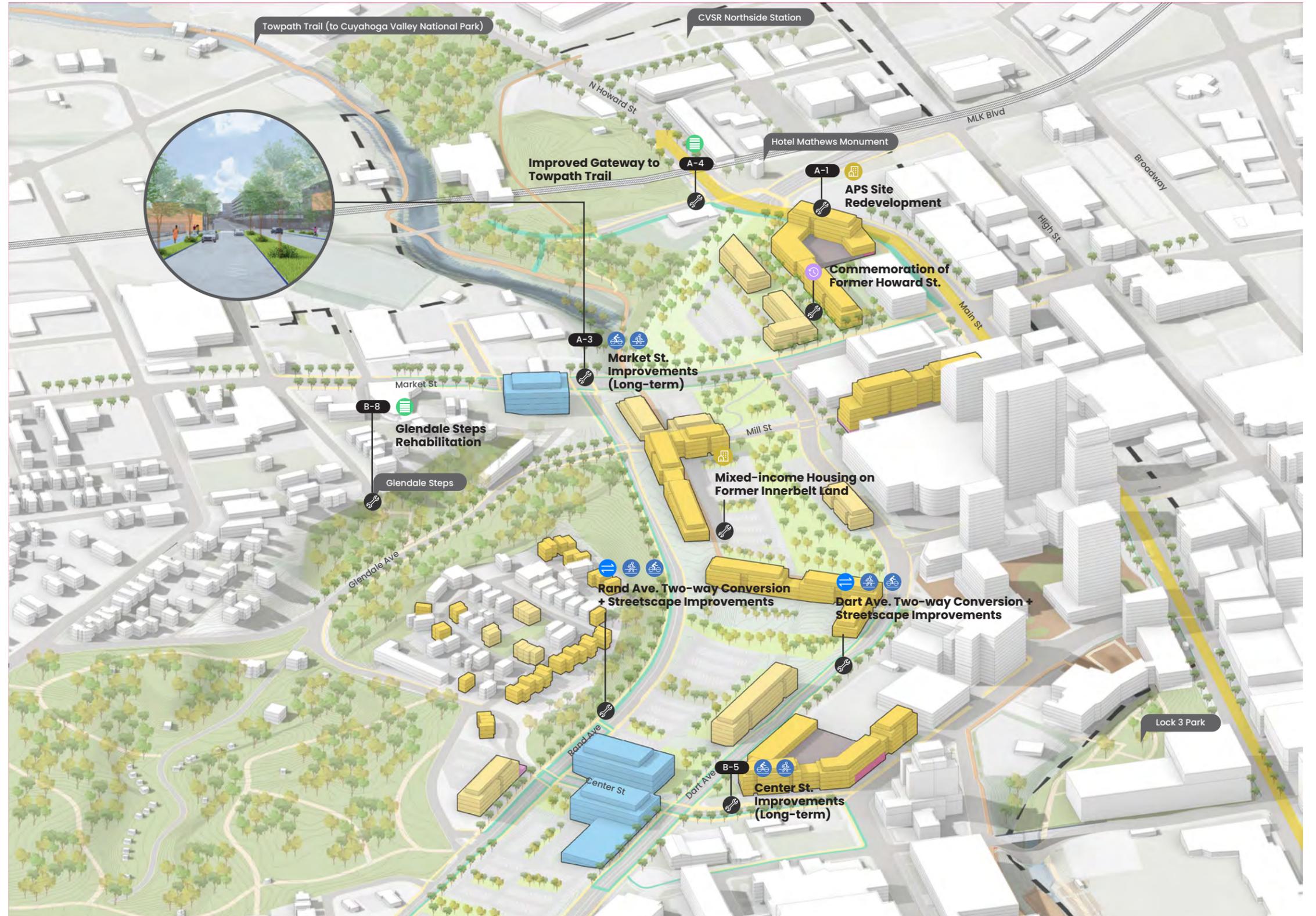


## MARKET ST. &amp; GLENDALE AREA

## Market St. & Glendale Area

### 30+ Years

Over the long term, the full removal of highway ramps will enable this section of the Innerbelt to be redeveloped, re-integrating the Glendale and West Hill neighborhoods fully into the fabric of downtown. In the former Innerbelt right-of-way, new development will benefit from its proximity to the Towpath. Market St. will have become a comfortable, urban-scaled street that welcomes West Akron residents downtown, while a reconfigured MLK/Main St. intersection will become a major gateway connecting downtown Akron with the scenic areas along the Cuyahoga Valley.



**MARKET ST. & GLENDALE AREA**



**Temporary Planting of the Innerbelt Right-of-way**



BEFORE



Over the long term, the full removal of highway ramps will enable this section of the Innerbelt to be redeveloped, re-integrating the Glendale and West Hill neighborhoods fully into the fabric of downtown. In the former Innerbelt right-of-way, new development will benefit from its proximity to the Towpath. Market St. will have become a comfortable, urban-scaled street that welcomes West Akron residents downtown, while a reconfigured MLK/Main St. intersection will become a major gateway connecting downtown Akron with the scenic areas along the Cuyahoga Valley.

**NOTES**

- B-1** Infill Housing Development on Oak Park Drive
- A-2** 50 Main St. City-owned Parking Lot Redevelopment



**Convert Mill St. Bridge to Pedestrian Use **B-6****

BEFORE



Mill St. Bridge currently carries little traffic. In the short-term, it can be repurposed as a pedestrian bridge, providing another safe connection from downtown to the Glendale neighborhood. This can be paired with short-term improvements to Glendale Park (e.g. temporary events, pop-up markets), supporting the emerging cluster of neighborhood small businesses on Glendale Ave.



**Market St. Improvements**

BEFORE



The current Market St. is dramatically oversized and feels forbidding and unsafe. Improving Market St. is a key component of improving the east-west connections disrupted by the Innerbelt.

Short-term improvements should focus on pedestrian safety, including reducing curb radii and adding pedestrian crosswalks. Longer-term improvements include a dedicated bicycle connection that closes the gap between the Maple St. bike lane and the Main St. cycletrack, and a landscaped median that reduces the road width and slows down traffic entering downtown.



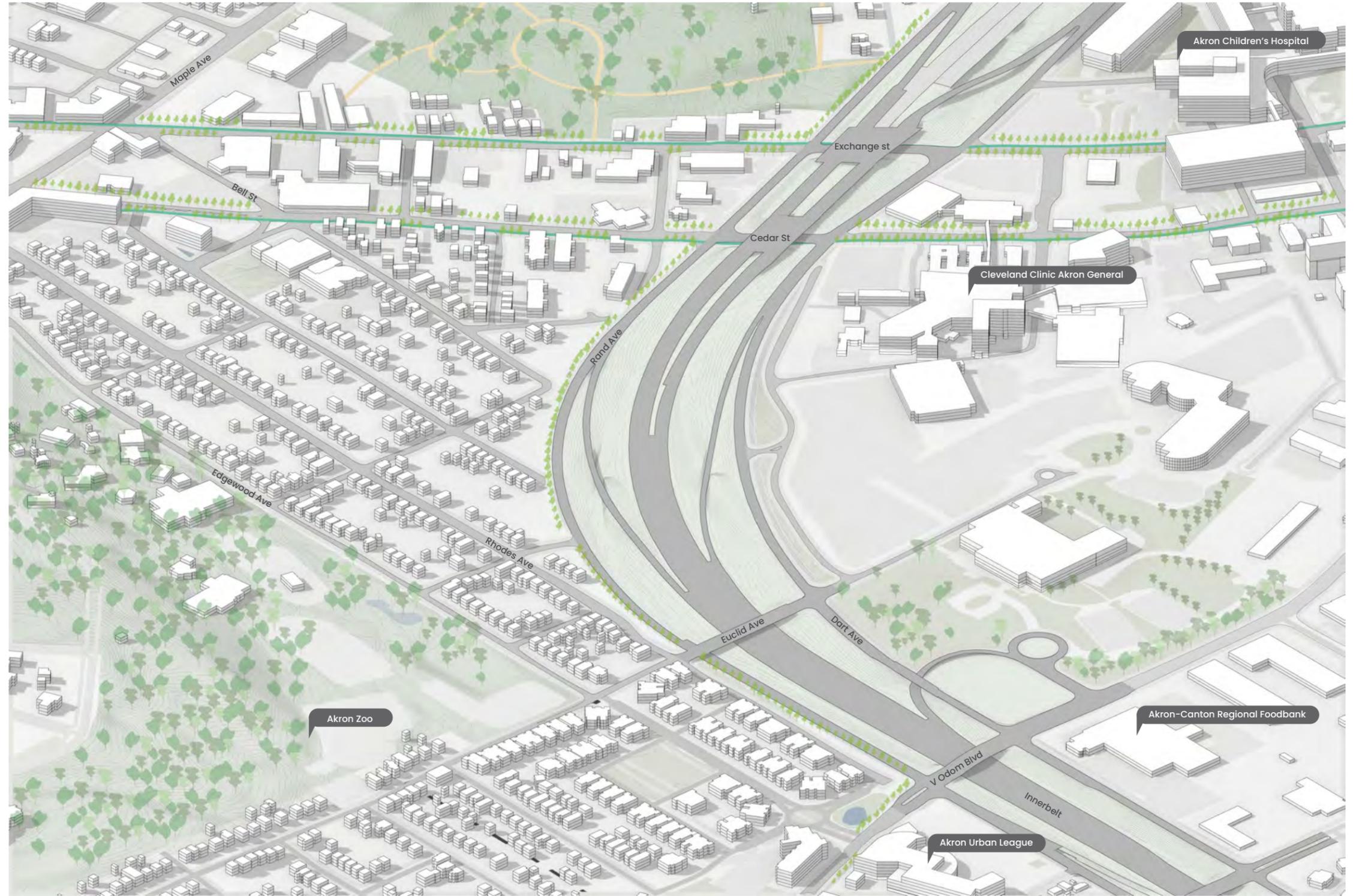
**NOTES**

- A-1** Akron Public Schools Site Redevelopment
- A-2** 50 Main St. City-owned Parking Lot Redevelopment
- A-3** Market St. Bike/Pedestrian Improvements

## EXCHANGE / CEDAR ST. &amp; RHODES TRIANGLE

## Exchange / Cedar St. & Rhodes Triangle Today

Today, the area is defined by a stark contrast: large hospital campuses on one side of the active Innerbelt and residential neighborhoods on the other. The highway, off-ramps, and fast-moving traffic on the Exchange / Cedar one-way street pair create a confusing, hostile environment for people on foot or bike, with few safe crossings and highway infrastructure that slices up otherwise developable land. As a result, vacant and underused parcels sit between the hospitals and nearby neighborhoods, deepening the sense of separation from downtown.

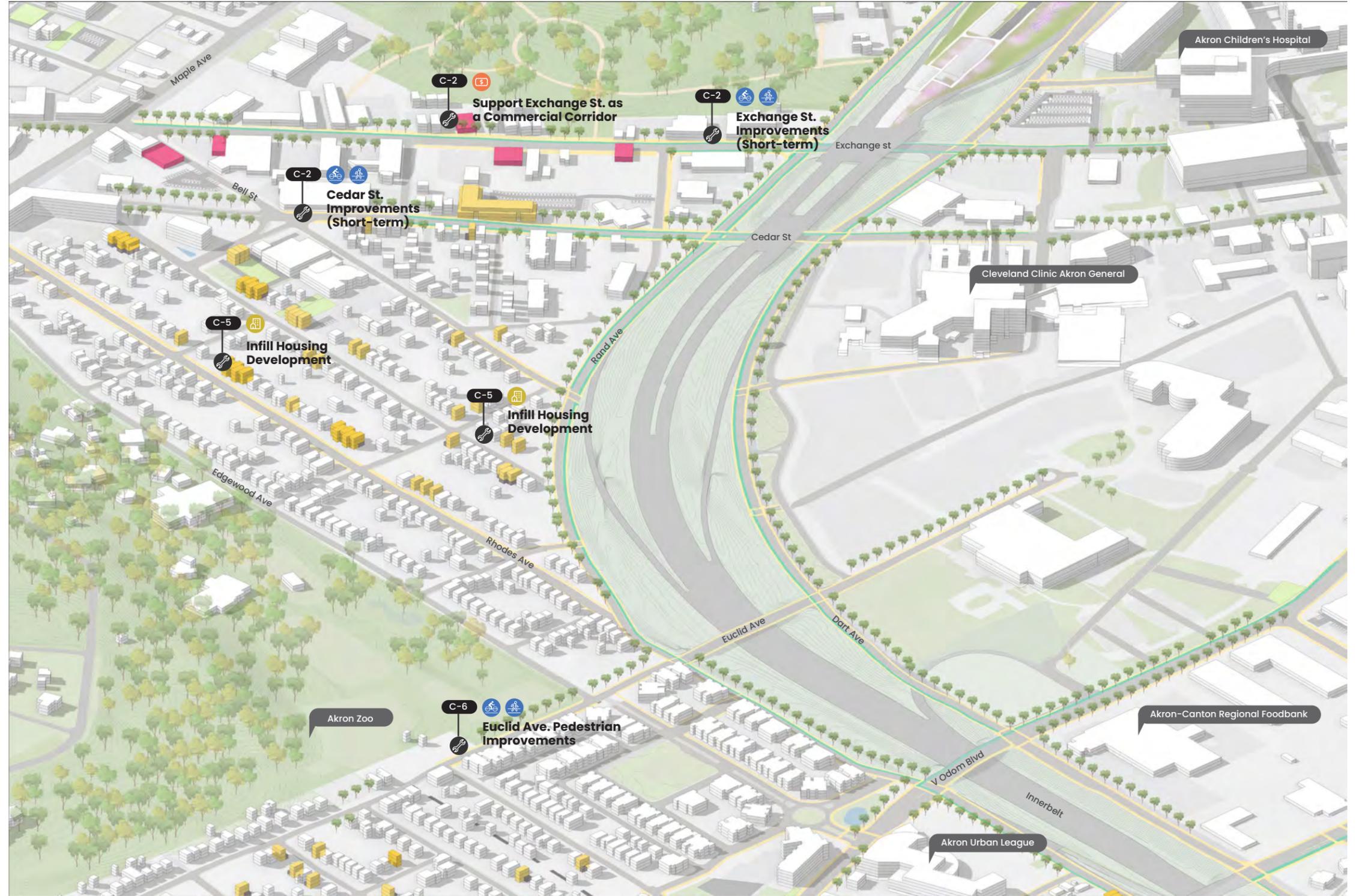


## EXCHANGE / CEDAR ST. &amp; RHODES TRIANGLE

## Exchange / Cedar St. & Rhodes Triangle

### 5 Years

In the near term, early actions focus on activating underused parcels at the bend of the Innerbelt and along Exchange and Cedar. New mixed-use and community-serving development on City and institutional land can bring small businesses, neighborhood services, and jobs closer to residents, while incremental pedestrian and transit improvements make it easier to move between the hospitals, neighborhoods, and downtown. New affordable rental and homeownership opportunities on vacant lots in Rhodes Triangle begin to repair the neighborhood fabric and provide customers for emerging local businesses.

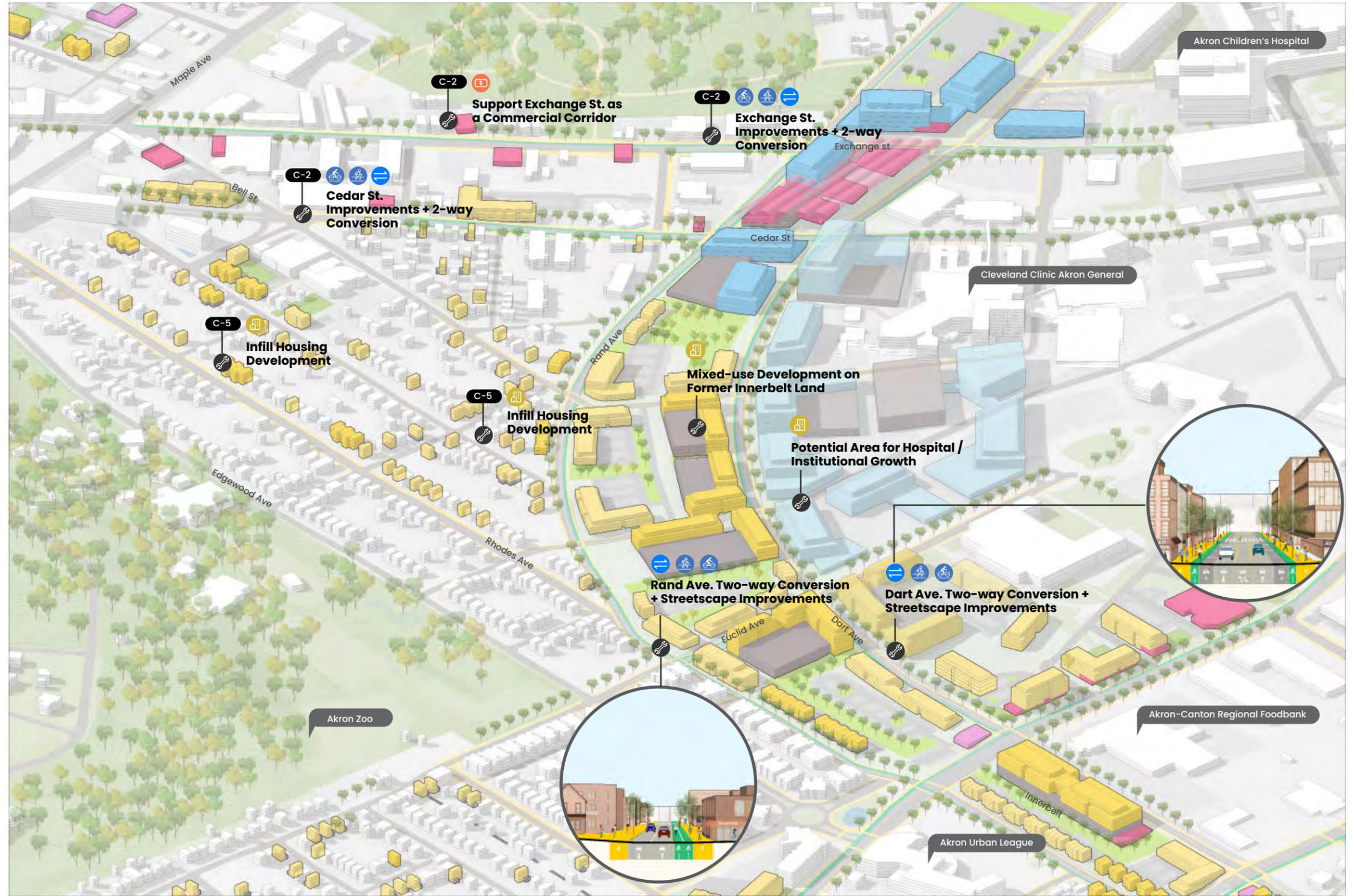


## EXCHANGE / CEDAR ST. &amp; RHODES TRIANGLE

## Exchange / Cedar St. & Rhodes Triangle

### 30+ Years

Over the long term, full decommissioning of the Innerbelt in this area allows a new mixed-use district to grow between the hospitals and surrounding neighborhoods. A mix of affordable and market-rate housing supports hospital workers while also expanding housing choices for longtime neighborhood residents. Thoughtful building scale and street design create smooth transitions between the residential neighborhood to the west and the hospitals to the east, balancing neighborhood character with urban density. The uninteresting surface parking lots fronting on Dart Ave. are replaced with a more pedestrian-friendly street frontage, giving Dart Ave. the potential to become the new front door to the Cleveland Clinic Akron General hospital campus. New commercial and office uses, public spaces, and walkable streets transform a fragmented landscape into a connected urban fabric.



EXCHANGE / CEDAR ST. & RHODES TRIANGLE

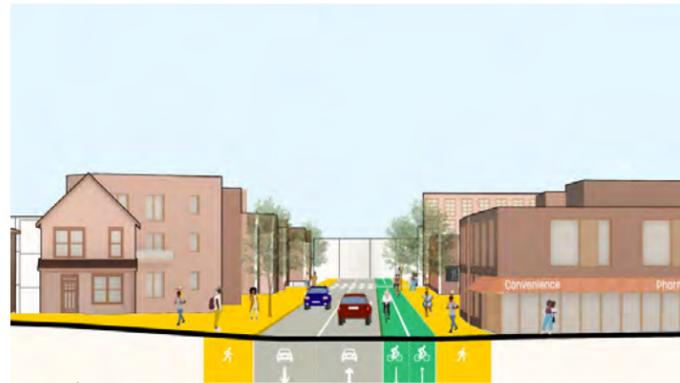
Reconnecting Rhodes Triangle to the Hospitals Perspectives on the Ground



Thoughtful building scale and street design create smooth transitions between the Rhodes Triangle neighborhood to the west and the hospitals to the east, balancing neighborhood character with new development and urban density. New commercial and office uses, public spaces, and walkable streets transform a fragmented landscape into a connected urban fabric. The Form-Based zoning code guides the transformation of this area into the walkable, equitable neighborhood envisioned by the community.

RAND AVE.

A neighborhood-scaled street, with a safe, comfortable environment for pedestrians and cyclists and neighborhood-serving retail and services.

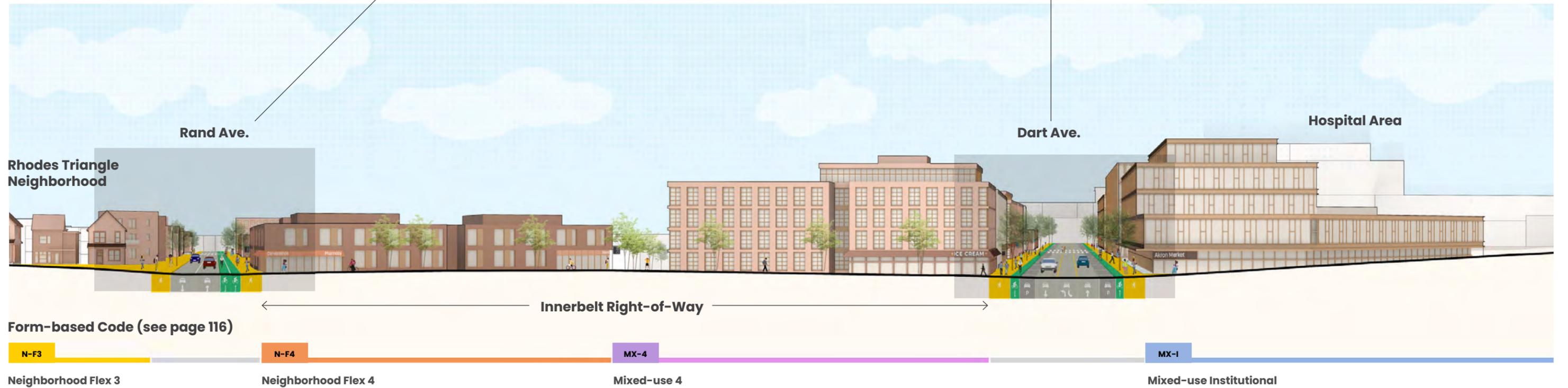


DART AVE.

A major urban thoroughfare with a mix of housing, office, and hospital uses on either side.



LOCATION KEY



## VERNON ODOM BLVD. &amp; SHERBONDY HILL

## Vernon Odom Blvd. & Sherbondy Hill Today

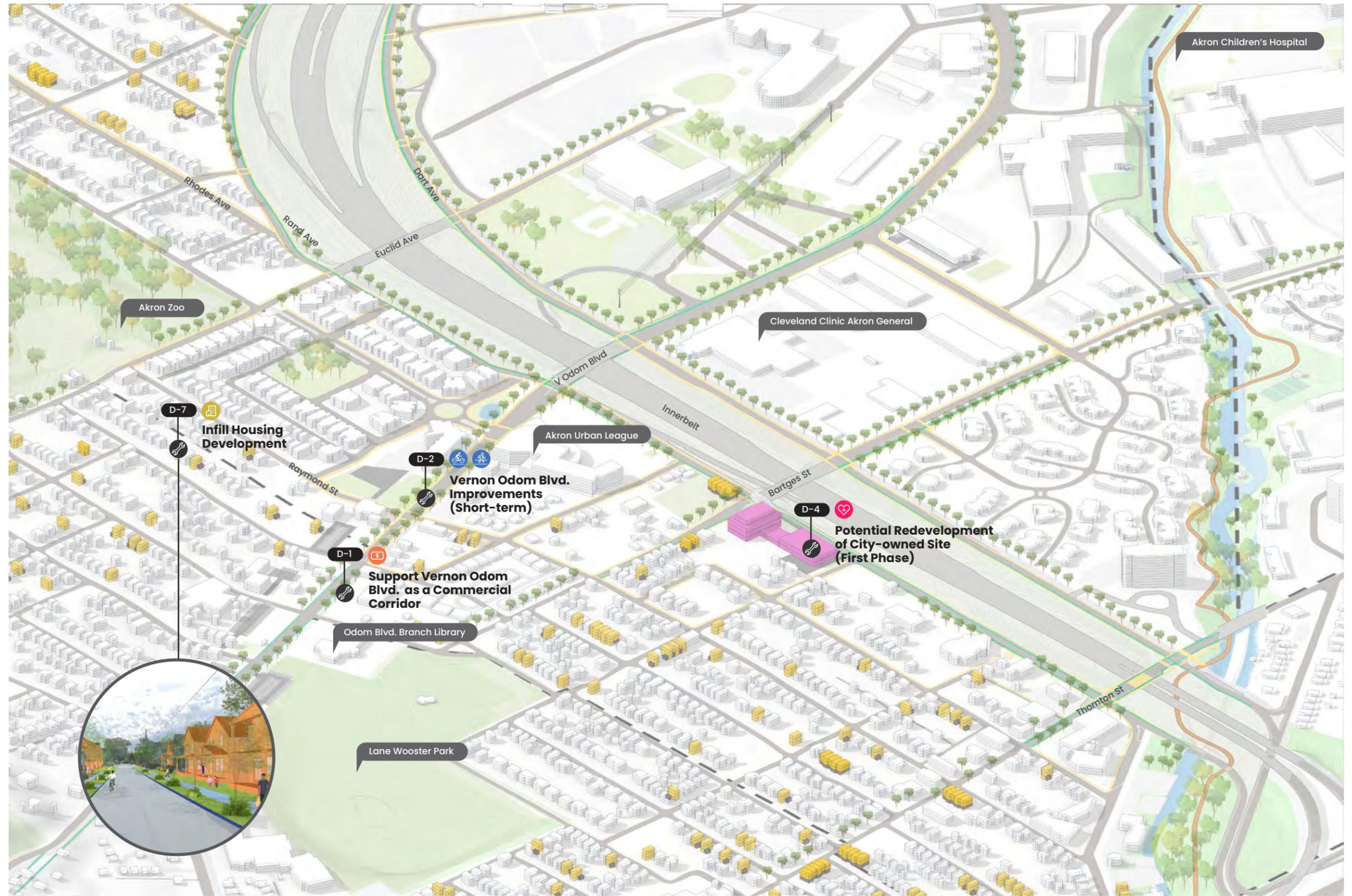
Today, the active Innerbelt still cuts through this part of the city, separating Sherbondy Hill from downtown Akron and key amenities like the Towpath Trail. Limited east-west connections make it difficult for residents to reach jobs, services, and cultural destinations downtown. The corridor remains fragmented, even though former Wooster Ave., now Vernon Odom Blvd., was once a vibrant business district and major connector to downtown.



## VERNON ODOM BLVD. &amp; SHERBONDY HILL

## Vernon Odom Blvd. & Sherbondy Hill 5 Years

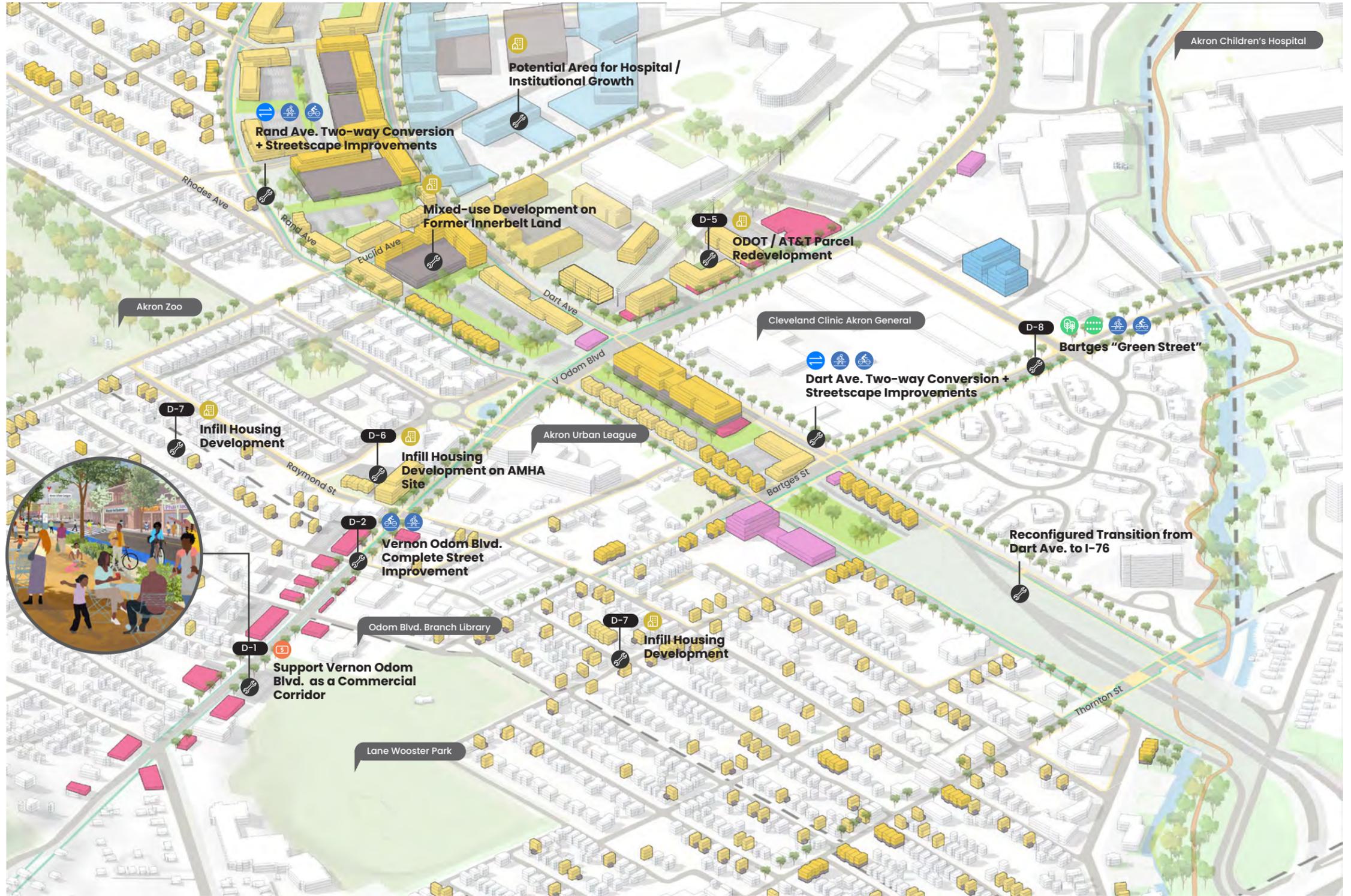
In the near term, targeted development along Vernon Odom Blvd. begins to restore commercial life to what was once Wooster Avenue, bringing neighborhood retail, services, and jobs closer to Sherbondy Hill residents. Infill mixed-income housing on vacant and underused lots throughout the neighborhood helps repair the residential fabric and adds the customer base needed to support small businesses. Pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including safer crossings and bike connections, improve access to key amenities like the Towpath Trail. Investments in cultural placemaking, such as memorials and public art, honor the area's history and highlight its significance to Akron's Black community. Together, these changes reintroduce Vernon Odom Blvd. as a destination for small businesses and community services and begin to restore the area as a walkable, mixed-use corridor.



VERNON ODOM BLVD. & SHERBONDY HILL

# Vernon Odom Blvd. & Sherbondy Hill 30+ Years

Once the southern portion of the Innerbelt is decommissioned, Sherbondy Hill can be more fully reconnected to the rest of the city. Continued mixed-income infill housing development continues to repair the neighborhood fabric, while new development on land reclaimed from the Innerbelt supports larger-scale residential or employment uses. Existing residents are further supported by policies such as home repair assistance and property tax relief, helping them stay and benefit from change. Together, these investments revitalize this important urban neighborhood.



## VERNON ODOM BLVD. & SHERBONDY HILL

### Future Vernon Odom Blvd. Wooster Ave. Restored



Along Vernon Odom Blvd., a reimagined Wooster Avenue begins to take shape, with new buildings framing the street to create a continuous street wall, and enhanced sidewalks, bike lanes, and street trees that improve the pedestrian experience. Existing buildings will be revitalized to support new businesses and create space for local entrepreneurs.

The updated form-based zoning provides the framework to ensure that development supports this vision, guiding building placement, scale, and design to foster a lively, human-centered streetscape. Small businesses are supported through Social Impact Tools like loans and funding for business expansion.

Together, these strategies restore Wooster Avenue to its historic role as a thriving business district, transforming it once again into a vibrant, community-focused corridor that celebrates local identity while offering opportunities for future growth.



**VERNON ODOM BLVD. & SHERBONDY HILL**



**Infill Housing Development in Sherbondy Hill**



**BEFORE**



Sherbondy Hill has a significant number of vacant sites owned by the City, the Summit County Land Bank, and private owners. These sites can be developed into housing that is mixed-income – containing both market-rate and affordable units – and diverse in type. These developments begin to repair the neighborhood urban fabric and bring the population necessary to support emerging neighborhood businesses.

**NOTES**

- ❶ Townhomes
- ❷ Narrow Single Family Home
- ❸ Senior Single Family Home
- ❹ Narrow Single Family Home
- ❺ Stacked Duplex

05

# Implementation Framework

# Implementation Framework

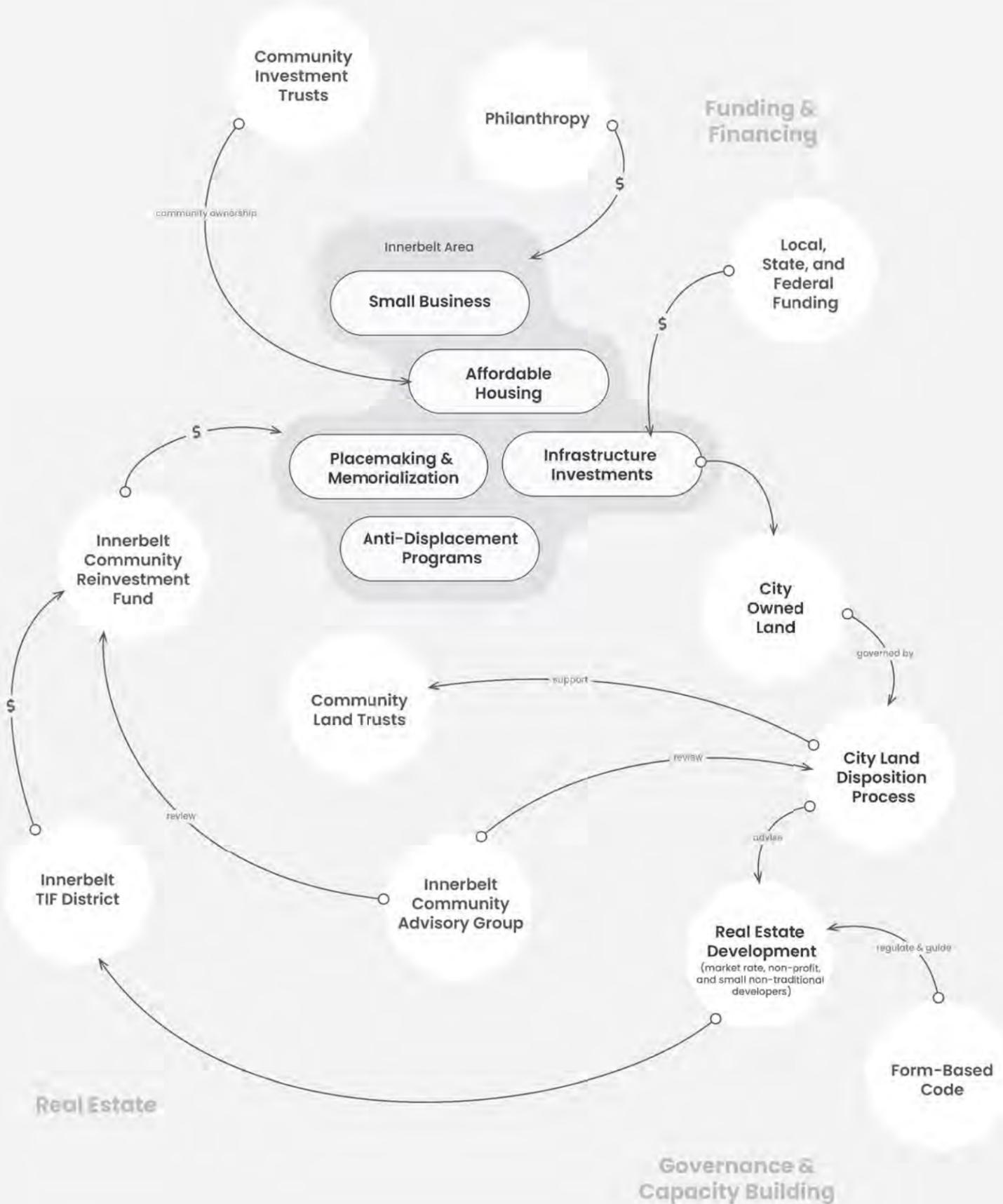
**This section explains how the Master Plan’s ideas are turned into funded, implemented projects, and how these projects are held accountable to the Master Plan’s long-term vision.**

Achieving the Master Plan’s 30+ year vision requires changing past habits. Akron’s pattern of reactive decisions has sometimes favored short-term wins over long-term goals. The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail, a local success story, shows the value of long-term planning and steady, incremental implementation that stays faithful to a shared vision.

In response, the Implementation Framework establishes **guardrails**, which are clear rules and review steps that ensure transparency, community oversight, and adherence to the long-term vision even as markets and leadership change. Examples include the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group and the Form-based Code.

Other tools are **enablers** in that they build the City’s capacity to deliver. For example, the Innerbelt Community Reinvestment Fund directs new value back to the neighborhoods most impacted by the Innerbelt and helps cover pre-development and gap costs; and a Federal and State Funding Strategy proactively secures outside dollars.





**TOOLS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

**Funding & Financing Tools**

Tools that create additional funding capacity for community priorities and geographically target funding to the Innerbelt area

- Innerbelt Community Reinvestment Fund
- Innerbelt TIF District
- Ohio & Federal Funding Strategy

**Real Estate Tools**

Tools that intentionally direct the design, use, and ownership of land and real estate assets to achieve the Master Plan's goals

- City Land Disposition Process Update
- Community Land Trusts (CLTs)
- Community Investment Trusts

**Governance & Capacity Building Tools**

Tools that build the community's capacity to advance the Master Plan's priorities and conduct oversight of its implementation

- Form-Based Zoning Code
- Innerbelt Community Advisory Group
- Technical Assistance & Capacity Building for Non-traditional Developers

## FUNDING TOOLS

## Innerbelt Community Reinvestment Fund

A dedicated fund that fills gaps in current funding programs and supports critical but hard-to-finance activities like homeowner tax relief, pre-development soft costs, and land acquisition for affordable housing. Inspired by models such as the Atlanta BeltLine Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Fund can be capitalized through TIF (Tax Increment Financing) revenue, philanthropic partnerships, bond proceeds, and selective land-sale proceeds.

### Desired Goals

- Increase funding for social impact tools (such as anti-displacement programs), including ones that currently don't have funding
- Funding with a geographic focus on the areas around the Innerbelt

### Details of the Reinvestment Fund

#### Potential Sources

- Revenue from Tax Increment Financing (TIF). See details in a subsequent section "Innerbelt TIF District".
- Sales proceeds of City land for market-rate development. In the near term, this primarily involves the sale of City land for market-rate single-family development in neighborhoods like the Rhodes Triangle.
- Philanthropic contribution

#### Potential Uses

- Legacy homeowner tax relief
- Pre-development soft-costs and site acquisition for affordable housing and other Innerbelt Master Plan projects
- City staff for ongoing Innerbelt implementation and coordination between stakeholders

- Other possible uses can be determined and co-developed with the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group, and may be adjusted over time to respond to changing community priorities

### Governance & Administration of the Fund

The fund will be administered by the City, with technical assistance from DFA, the Summit County Land Bank, and other groups listed in previous documents. The City can draw on previous experience with dedicated community reinvestment funds, such as the Rubber City Match program.

#### CASE STUDY

##### Sweet Auburn Technical Assistance & Predevelopment Fund

ATLANTA, GA

A place-based fund providing grants and services for mission-aligned projects in the Sweet Auburn neighborhood, covering early soft costs and technical help to move projects to "financeable." The program has committed \$1.7M+ to date; initial capital included \$500k from the Eastside TAD (Tax Allocation District) and \$200k from Central Atlanta Progress.

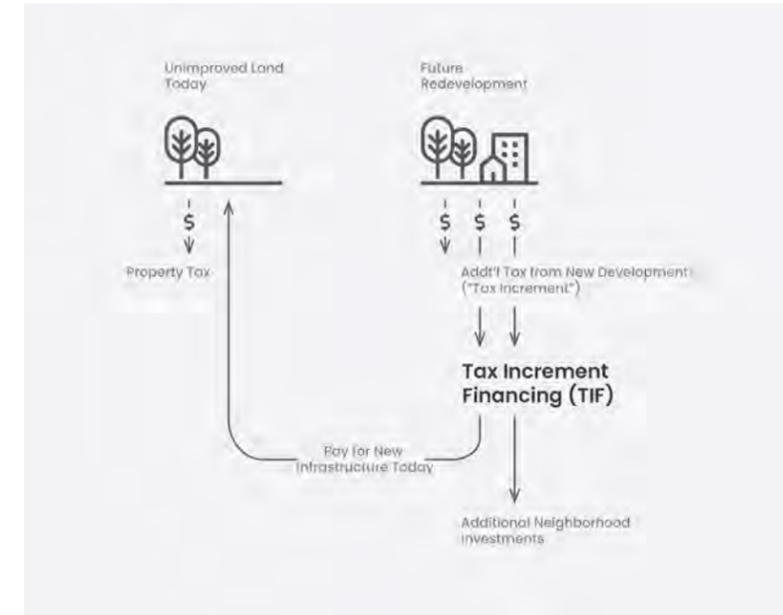
##### Atlanta BeltLine Legacy Resident Retention Program (LRRP)

ATLANTA, GA

A dedicated fund that pays annual property-tax increases for qualified legacy homeowners through the 2030 tax year, stabilizing households as public and private investment increases nearby. Philanthropic partners have provided additional support to expand resident stability programs.

## FUNDING TOOLS

## Innerbelt TIF District(s)



Tax Increment Financing (TIF) lets the City invest in public improvements now and pay for them over time with a portion of the new property value created by those improvements. Under Ohio's TIF programs, the City can redirect a share of future tax increment to eligible costs. In the Innerbelt area, TIF revenues can help fund infrastructure that make redevelopment possible, while also capturing value to support community priorities identified in the Master Plan.

### Desired Goals

- Increase funding for new and existing social impact tools
- Funding with a geographic focus

### Details of the Innerbelt TIF District(s)

The City has extensive experience deploying TIF in the past to fund infrastructure and enable economic and community development. In the Innerbelt area, the City can potentially create multiple TIF districts, utilizing the .40 and .41 programs depending on the specific development objectives, ownership, and conditions on each site.

### Development of Priorities and Evaluation Criteria

The Use of TIF is subject to City review and approval by City Council. The City can develop and adopt clearly defined priorities and evaluation criteria for the use of City TIF in the Innerbelt area, in accordance with the priorities outlined in the Master Plan. The City can also engage the Community Advisory Group during the review of TIF applications, development agreement negotiations, and the approval of TIF by City Council.

## FUNDING TOOLS

## State & Federal Funding Strategy

A broader strategy to thoughtfully convene state agencies and local stakeholders, this approach can help secure large-scale funding from programs like the All Ohio Future Fund or the Transformational Mixed-use Development Program, positioning Akron to access significant state dollars for catalytic projects in the Innerbelt and beyond.

### Desired Goals

- Increase funding for new and existing social impact tools
- Fund large catalytic projects that incorporate social impact tools

### Details of the Strategy

See accompanying table for a list of potential sources.

### City Actions

- Convene DFA, Ohio State Department of Development, and Ohio Housing Finance Agency to identify opportunities for State investment in large-scale development projects around the Innerbelt.
- Determine, and better market, “moonshot” development opportunities that are more attractive to State programs.

REAL ESTATE TOOLS

# City Land Disposition Process Update

This policy update will formalize an updated process for any sale or transfer of City-owned land in the Innerbelt area, with review by the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group based on clearly defined criteria. This review will ensure that land disposition decisions in the Innerbelt area will not simply focus on maximizing financial value, but follow “best use” in accordance with the Master Plan and promote inclusion of community building components such as non-profit or community ownership, support for small developers, and balance of uses aligned with the Master Plan. In addition, the City will continue to proactively market publicly-owned land in accordance with Master Plan priorities.

## Desired Goals

- Make real estate assets available for community development and programs that incorporate social impact tools and advance plan goals
- Generate sale and lease proceeds to fund social impact tools and advance Master Plan goals

## Details of the Process Update

### Creation of New Community Advisory Capacity

Innerbelt Community Advisory capacity should be enhanced and formalized to support oversight and stewardship of the implementation of the Innerbelt Master Plan. This document refers to that capacity as an Innerbelt Advisory Group as a placeholder for the governing body, or bodies, who will evolve and be formalized to steward the plan. Made up of community-appointed members, community-based organizations, technical expertise, and city staff members, the role of the Innerbelt Advisory Group may include:

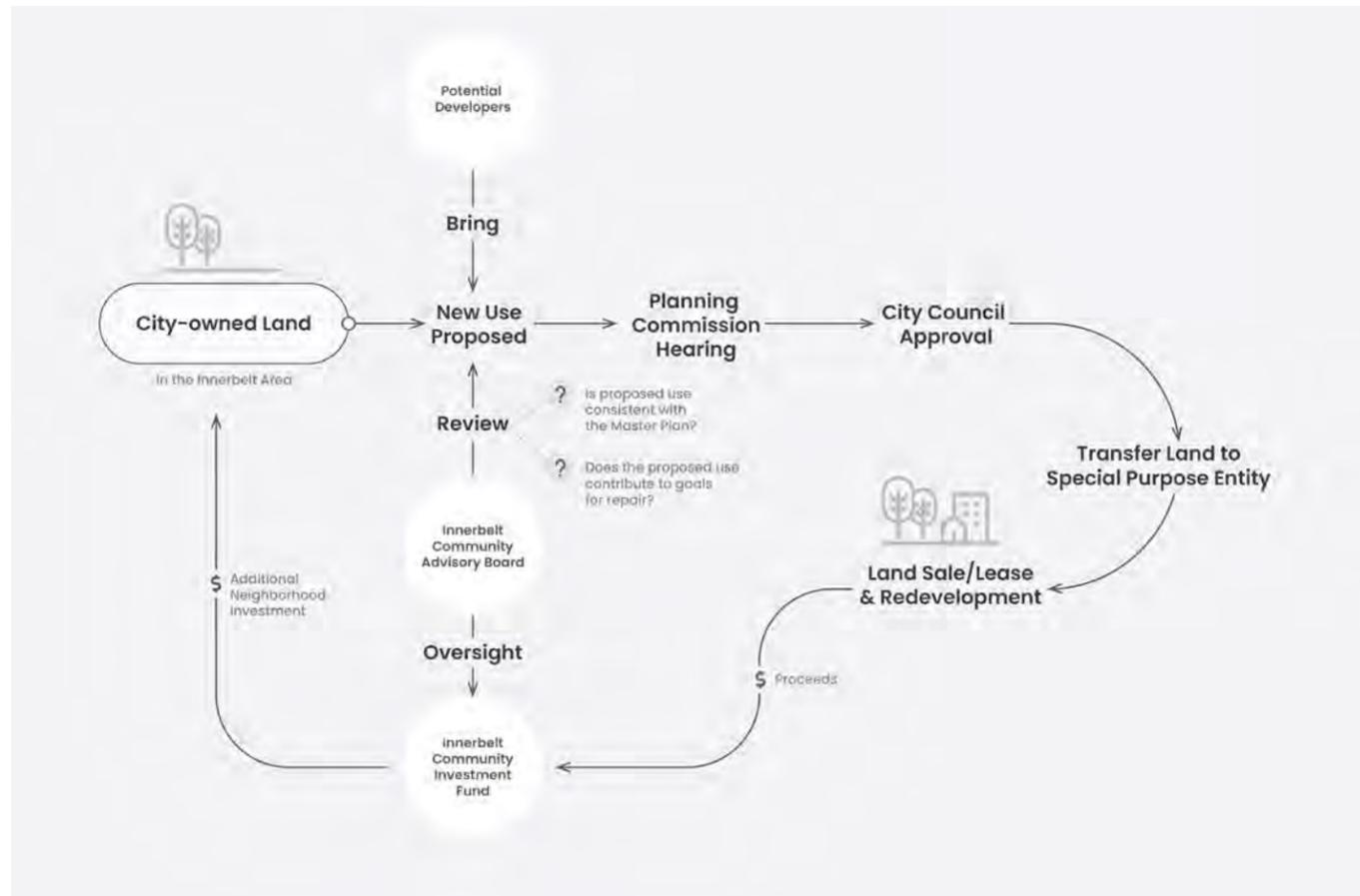
- Advancing Master Plan goals
- Advising City government in the review and approval of City land disposition
- Evaluation of City real estate assets and development feasibility
- Advisory and technical capacity support for City marketing and solicitation processes
- Evaluation of responses to City real estate and developer solicitations, including TIF proposals
- Advisory and technical assistance for non-profit and non-traditional developer proposals, supporting owner-operators and development partnerships that wish to pursue nonprofit ownership and governance structures like land trusts
- Fund social impact tools

### Development of Disposition Priorities and Evaluation Criteria

City Staff and City Council will develop and adopt priorities and evaluation criteria for both use and ownership of City land assets in the Innerbelt area, ensuring that they are aligned with Master Plan goals. These policies will:

- Balance non-profit, community-based, and commercially-driven uses across City-owned assets
- Support owner-operators and development partnerships that wish to pursue non-profit ownership and governance structures like land trusts
- Identify and reserve acquisition opportunities for non-traditional developers and smaller organizations

These priorities and evaluation criteria should be developed specifically for different City-owned asset types, such as site size categories or target use categories. The Innerbelt Community Advisory Group can use these priorities and evaluation criteria as instruments for review.



REAL ESTATE TOOLS

## Community & Non-profit Ownership

A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a non-profit model that keeps land in community stewardship. The CLT holds title to the land, while homes or commercial spaces on that land are sold or leased to residents and businesses through long-term, renewable ground leases with resale rules that preserve affordability over time. If the Innerbelt area begins to experience rapidly escalating land values, a CLT becomes an “if-then” tool: if prices start to spike, then the City and partners can use a CLT to protect long-term affordability, create pathways to shared equity, and prevent displacement by locking in stable costs for households and neighborhood-serving businesses.

### Desired Goals

Preserve long-term housing affordability and prevent displacement due to rapidly escalating land value

**CASE STUDY**

### Central Ohio Community Land Trust (COCLT)

COLUMBUS, OH

COCLT is a nonprofit community land trust created in 2018 as a subsidiary of the Franklin County land bank (COCIC). The land bank assembles sites; the CLT holds land in perpetuity and sells the homes on 99-year ground leases to income-eligible buyers, preserving affordability long-term.

COCLT focuses on neighborhoods with rising housing costs (e.g., Linden, Franklinton), producing permanently affordable, for-sale homes while the CLT retains land ownership to limit speculation and keep prices stable across resales.

Since launch, COCLT (with COCIC) has delivered 100+ permanently affordable homes countywide, and is pursuing a pipeline towards 500 homes.

REAL ESTATE TOOLS

## Community Investment Trusts



Community Investment Trusts (CITs) let neighborhood residents pool resources to collectively own real estate, most often existing commercial buildings. CITs use small-dollar, locally available ownership shares so residents can invest close to home, receive potential dividends, and build wealth over time under clear, community-oriented rules. In the Innerbelt context, CITs can stabilize affordable, community-controlled space for small businesses and keep a share of rising value in local hands.

The City will convene local nonprofit developers, CDCs, and philanthropic partners to assess a CIT and/or cooperative acquisition model for existing neighborhood commercial assets in and around the Innerbelt. The assessment will identify candidate properties, capital needs (acquisition and basic rehab), governance and compliance requirements, and an approach to affordable commercial rents and local shareholder enrollment.

### Desired Goals

- Make the benefits of wealth-building through real estate investment and ownership more broadly shared among Innerbelt residents
- Secure long-term affordability for neighborhood small business spaces

**CASE STUDY**

### East Portland Community Investment Trust (Plaza 122)

PORTLAND, OR

Residents living in four nearby ZIP codes can buy \$10-\$100 monthly shares to collectively own Plaza 122, a ~29,000-sf neighborhood retail center with ~26-30 local business and nonprofit tenants. The CIT offers a long-term, community-oriented path to local real-estate ownership; structure and learnings emphasize small-dollar investing and steady returns tied to the property.

GOVERNANCE & CAPACITY-BUILDING

## Form-Based Zoning Code

Much of the historic neighborhood that residents fondly remember would not be allowed under Akron’s existing legacy zoning code. Existing zoning would also inhibit realizing the community’s vision as laid out in the Innerbelt Master Plan. To address this challenge, Akron is in the process of transitioning to a modern Form-Based Zoning Code that helps strengthen neighborhoods and support equitable growth. The new zoning code has already been adopted in the Merriman Valley and Summit Lake neighborhoods. Adoption of the Form-Based Code in the 840-acre Innerbelt planning area is an important first step towards achieving the goals of the master plan.

### What Is a Form-Based Code? How Does It Differ from Akron’s existing Legacy Zoning Code?

The legacy zoning code was designed to organize the city by land use - identifying what types of uses (houses, stores, factories, etc.) can go where. This type of regulation was initially developed to separate non-compatible uses (i.e. industrial uses and housing), but over time has prevented compatible uses from being located together (i.e. corner shops near housing). As a result the legacy zoning code has inhibited the creation of diverse, thriving neighborhoods. The legacy code also has excessive parking requirements that inhibit the creation of walkable districts and the redevelopment of existing buildings.

The Form-Based Code focuses on the physical form of the city rather than the specific use in the building. The new code regulates how buildings relate to the street, such as providing adequate windows facing the sidewalk and placing parking behind buildings. This helps create vibrant, safe, and walkable neighborhoods. By allowing for a mix of compatible uses, this type of zoning code allows residents to more easily access their daily needs.

The Akron Form-Based Code will be expanded to include additional Downtown and institutional zoning districts. The new districts will ensure there is a smooth transition between these more intense uses and the quieter character of the existing nearby neighborhoods.

### How Does the Form-Based Code Help Create Connected, Walkable, Safe, and Equitable Places?

The Form-Based Code regulations help create neighborhoods that are well-connected and easier for walking. Allowing a mix of uses means that a greater range of neighborhood supportive uses can be located within the community, improving resident access and reducing transportation needs. The reduction of parking requirements means that more uses can occur in close proximity, rather than being separated by large parking lots. The new zoning allows for a range of desirable uses to occur, while having the flexibility to accommodate changing real estate market conditions. The Form-Based Code supports small businesses by removing regulations that add excessive costs to development. Finally, the Code supports affordability by allowing for the construction of a broader range of housing types and pricepoints to meet residents’ desires and budgets.

### How Will a Zoning Update Affect Residents?

If you live in or own a building in a neighborhood where zoning updates occur, you will be notified about the proposed changes and have the opportunity to weigh in through a public process. Existing buildings and uses are grandfathered in. This means you do not need to do anything to conform to the new rules unless you make a significant change to your property. Ultimately, the code update will open up new opportunities for creation of the type of thriving, walkable development that the community has said is desirable.

## Proposed Form-Based Zoning Categories



**OC Open Space Conservation**

Preserves open spaces that are mostly undeveloped. Limited support structures are permitted, and native vegetation is required.



**OP Open Space Park**

Open spaces that include parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and playcourts, that support passive and active recreation. Native vegetation is encouraged.



**N-F3 Neighborhood Flex 3**

A walkable neighborhood district with single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings and neighborhood commercial uses such as corner stores. 3-story height limit.



**N-F4 Neighborhood Flex 4**

A walkable neighborhood district with duplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings and neighborhood commercial uses. Buildings located near the street edge. 4-story height limit.



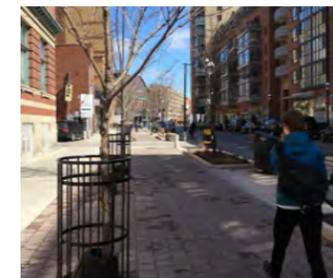
**MX-3 Mixed-Use 3**

Small to medium mixed-use buildings located at the street edge. Tall first floors with large windows to support retail uses. 3-story height limit.



**MX-4 Mixed-Use 4**

Small to medium mixed-use buildings located at the street edge. Tall first floors with large windows to support retail uses. Used for transitional areas between Downtown and neighborhoods. 4-story height limit.



**MX-6 Mixed-Use 6**

Larger mixed-use buildings located at the street edge. Tall first floors with large windows to support retail uses. Used for transitional areas between Downtown and neighborhoods. 6-story height limit with a 2-story height minimum.



**MX-F Mixed-Use Flex**

Supporting a wider variety of uses in a walkable environment. This category allows commercial, light industrial, maker space, lodging, office, and warehouse uses in mixed-use buildings with large windows on the ground floor. 4.5-story height limit.



**MX-I Mixed-Use Institutional**

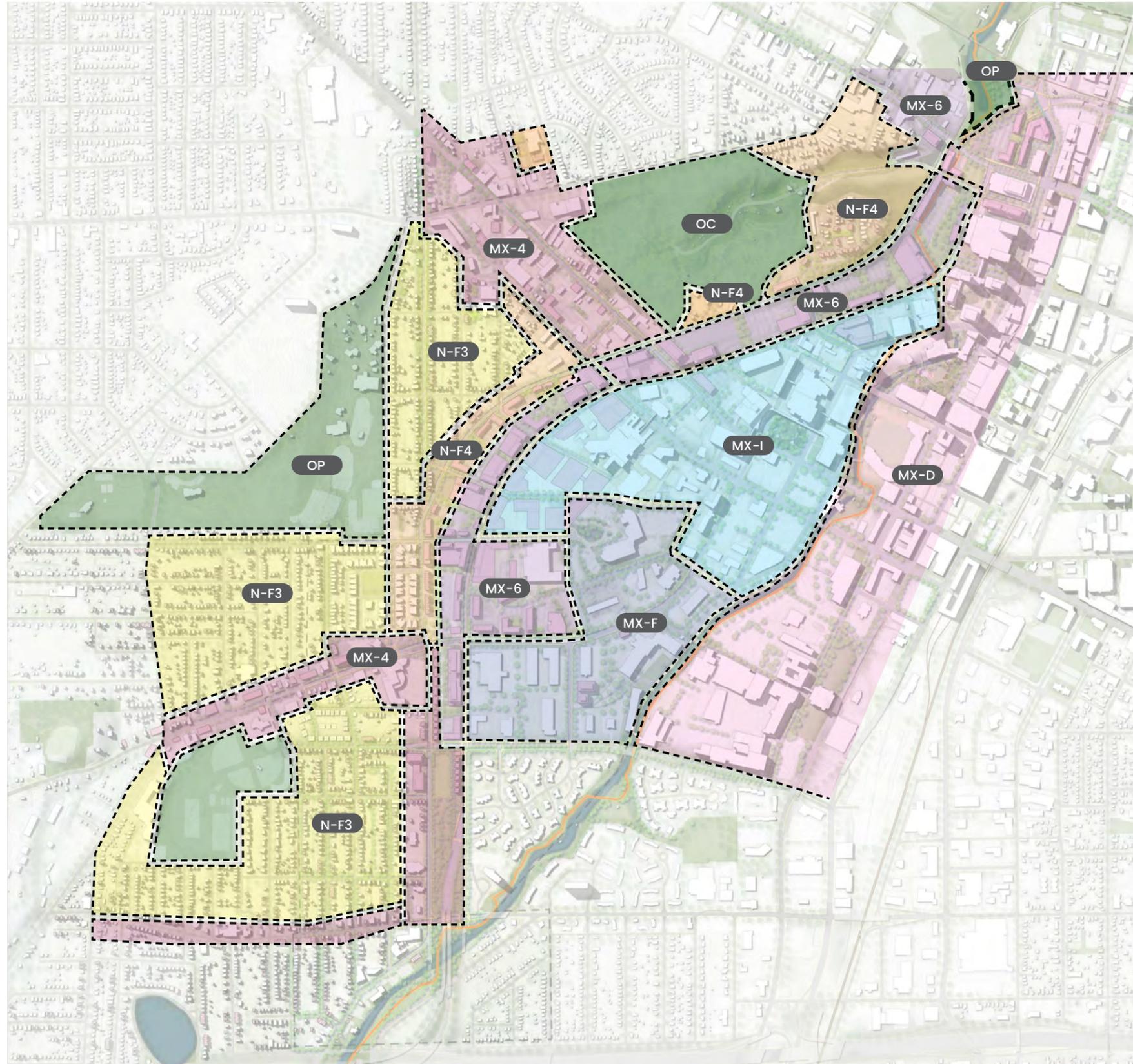
A walkable district where urban campus-focused uses support a strong street edge with flexibility for the inclusion of public-serving spaces and plazas. 12-story height limit with a 2-story height minimum.



**MX-D Mixed-Use Downtown**

This district includes medium to large mixed-use buildings that accommodate a variety of residential, retail, and commercial uses in a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly environment. Ground floors have large windows to support retail uses. 2-story minimum height.

## Proposed Form-Based Code Zoning Map



- OC Open Space Conservation**
  - Undeveloped open space
  - Limited support structures are permitted
  - Native vegetation required
- OP Open Space Park**
  - Passive & active recreation
  - Parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, playcourts
  - Native vegetation encouraged
- N-F3 Neighborhood Flex 3**
  - Single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings near the street edge
  - Neighborhood commercial uses
  - 3 stories maximum
- N-F4 Neighborhood Flex 4**
  - Duplexes, townhouses, small apartment buildings near the street edge
  - Neighborhood commercial uses
  - 4 stories maximum
- MX-3 Mixed-Use 3**
  - Small to medium mixed-use buildings at the street edge
  - Tall first floors with windows to support retail uses
  - 3 stories maximum
- MX-4 Mixed-Use 4**
  - Small to medium mixed-use buildings at the street edge
  - Tall first floors with windows to support retail uses
  - 4 stories maximum
- MX-6 Mixed-Use 6**
  - Larger mixed-use buildings at the street edge
  - Tall first floors with windows to support retail uses
  - 6 stories maximum, 2 stories minimum
- MX-F Mixed-Use Flex**
  - Commercial, light industrial, maker space, lodging, office, and warehouse uses
  - Mixed-use buildings with large windows on the ground floor
  - 4.5 stories maximum
- MX-I Mixed-Use Institutional**
  - Urban campus-focused uses
  - Strong street edge for the inclusion of public-serving spaces and plazas
  - 12 stories maximum, 2 stories minimum
- MX-D Mixed-Use Downtown**
  - Medium to large-sized mixed-use buildings
  - Variety of residential and commercial uses
  - Ground floors incorporate large windows to support retail uses
  - 2 stories minimum

## GOVERNANCE &amp; CAPACITY-BUILDING

## Innerbelt Community Advisory Group

The City will support the formalizing an Innerbelt Community Advisory Group structure to provide review and advisory capacity to City government on key decisions related to the implementation of the Master Plan, especially the disposition of City land and TIF.

### Desired Goals

Provide review and advisory support on City policies, funding, and real estate disposition related to the Master Plan, ensuring ongoing community oversight.

### Details of the Board

#### Potential Make-up

The Innerbelt Community Advisory Group may be a new organization or evolve from an existing one (i.e. Innerbelt Advisory Group). Its membership should include community-appointed members and representatives from key community organizations along with technical expertise in real estate and financial structures as well as city planning and economic development staff.

### Scope & Responsibilities

The Group is responsible for reviewing and advising City decisions related to the implementation of the Master Plan. Specifically, it can:

- Identify community needs and potential interventions, and surface shared challenges and solutions
- Review disposition of City-owned land in the Innerbelt area, based on clearly defined disposition priorities and evaluation criteria (see previous section on "City Land Disposition Process Update")
- Review investments and channeling of public funding (such as the Innerbelt Community Reinvestment Fund), based on similar clear criteria
- Identify community needs and potential interventions, and surface shared challenges and solutions
- Measure and report activity of social impact tools and progress toward Master Plan goals

### Coordination of Innerbelt Plan Implementation

In order to best inform, coordinate, and serve the community, the City will need to convene the Community Advisory Group with other community partners who may be interested in or organized around Master Plan goals. These convenings can foster collaboration among organizations that are often already working in similar areas, improve coordination of resources, and align their capacities and efforts towards common goals.

## GOVERNANCE &amp; CAPACITY-BUILDING

## Innerbelt Task Force & Working Groups

The City will convene a Task Force of local technical, funding, program, and community partners with working groups organized around Master Plan goals. This Task Force is intended to foster collaboration among organizations that are often already working in similar areas, and align their capacities and efforts towards common goals.

### Desired Goals

- Identify community needs and potential interventions, and surface shared challenges and solutions among Task Force members
- Improve coordination of existing resources and capacity among Task Force and Working group members, and assign roles and responsibilities
- Measure and report activity of social impact tools and progress toward Master Plan goals
- Provide technical assistance and advisory to City staff, City Council members, the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group, and other Innerbelt community members and organizations

## GOVERNANCE &amp; CAPACITY-BUILDING

## Technical Assistance & Capacity Building for Non-traditional Developers

The City can partner with local institutions to sponsor technical assistance for small, local developers and community organizations interested in real estate development, acquisition, operations and strategic partnerships

### Desired Goals

- Increase the capacity of community members and organizations to utilize real estate for programs and services that advance Master Plan goals
- Encourage participation of small, local, and minority-owned developers in order to build wealth locally

### Details of the Assistance & Capacity-building Efforts

#### Scope of the Technical Assistance

The scope of the real estate, financial, and legal technical assistance can potentially include:

- Partnerships with private developers and funders
- Real estate development, renovation, operation, and maintenance business planning and feasibility projection
- Navigating City land disposition process requirements and agreements
- Non-profit ownership and governance structures like Land Trusts

### Local Capacities

The City can partner with local capacities to deliver technical assistance and capacity building. These potential partners include DFA, EANDC, local CDCs, SMBA, Bounce, University of Akron SEED Clinic, DAP, Summit County Land Bank, Ohio Dept. of Development Minority Business Development Division (MBDD), Akron Urban League Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC), Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Western Reserve Community Fund, and other non-profit developers.

#### CASE STUDY

#### Building Community Value Detroit – Better Buildings, Better Blocks Program

DETROIT, MI

Neighborhood-based real estate development training program that connects participants with a network of resource partners who provide essential support for projects in and around Detroit. A space to help Detroiters bring the built environment back to life in our neighborhoods, and a community of developers who understand “value” as a concept beyond economic returns on investment.

**APPENDIX A**

**Catalog of  
Place-Based  
Projects**

The transformation of the Innerbelt is achieved through a series of incremental steps that build upon each other. These steps include “place-based” projects that focus on improving the physical built environment, such as redeveloping vacant sites, improving streets and infrastructure, or removing derelict infrastructure.

This Catalogue comprehensively describes all the place-based projects that are part of the vision to transform the area around the former Innerbelt. For each project, the Catalogue describes its goals and scope, timeline, and potential implementation pathway.

**HOW PROJECTS ARE IMPLEMENTED**

The City of Akron is responsible for many, but not all, of the projects. The typical implementation mechanisms for these projects include:

**City-led capital projects:** these are led and funded by the City, and typically involve City-owned infrastructure such as streets and sidewalks.

**Disposition of City-owned land:** for the redevelopment of publicly-owned land, the City typically seeks a partner to develop the site through a land disposition process. The Master Plan recommends ways in which this land disposition process can be made accountable to the community’s goals.

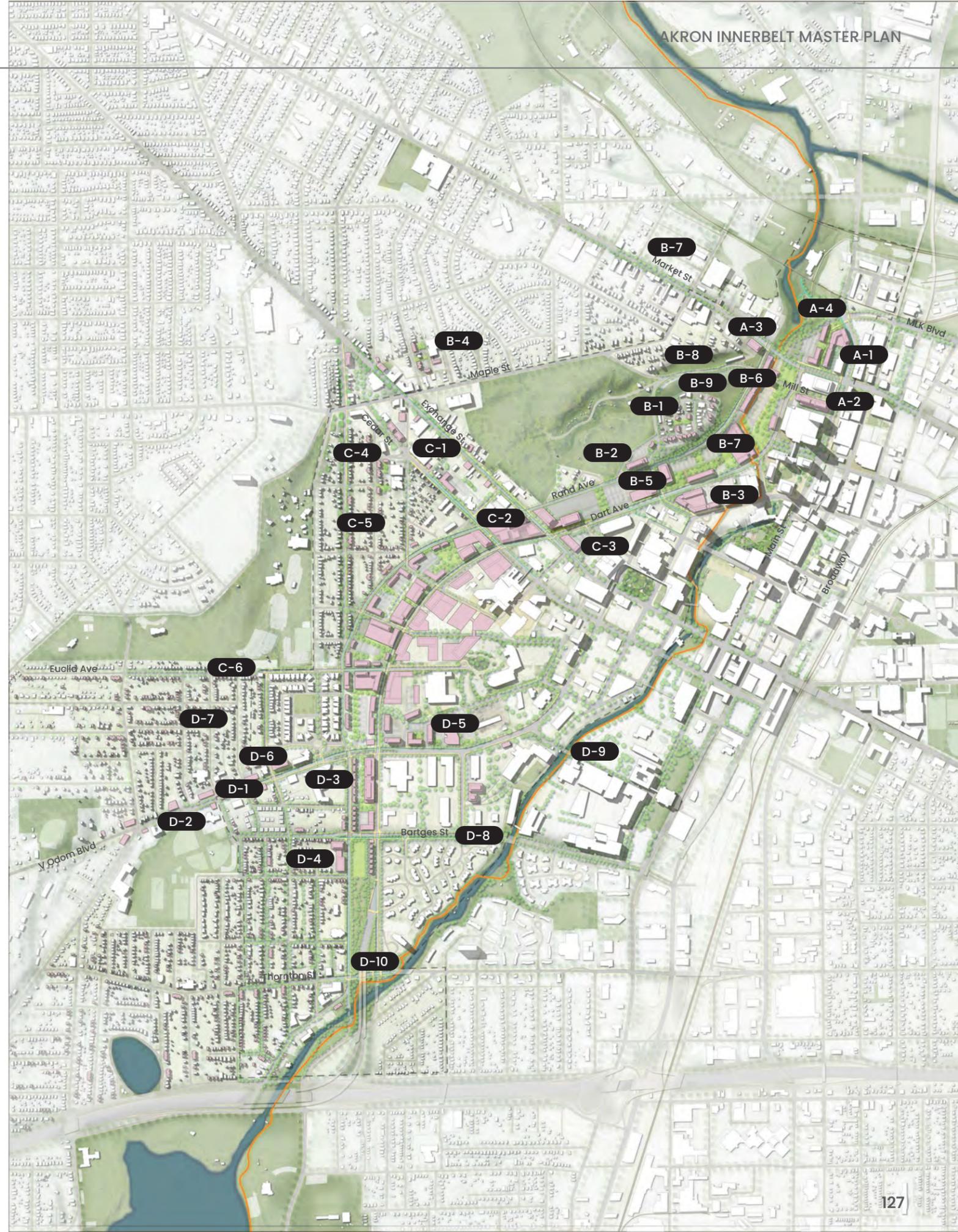
**Collaboration with private-sector partners:** for privately-owned sites, the City can work with their owners to explore development opportunities that advance the Master Plan’s vision.

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

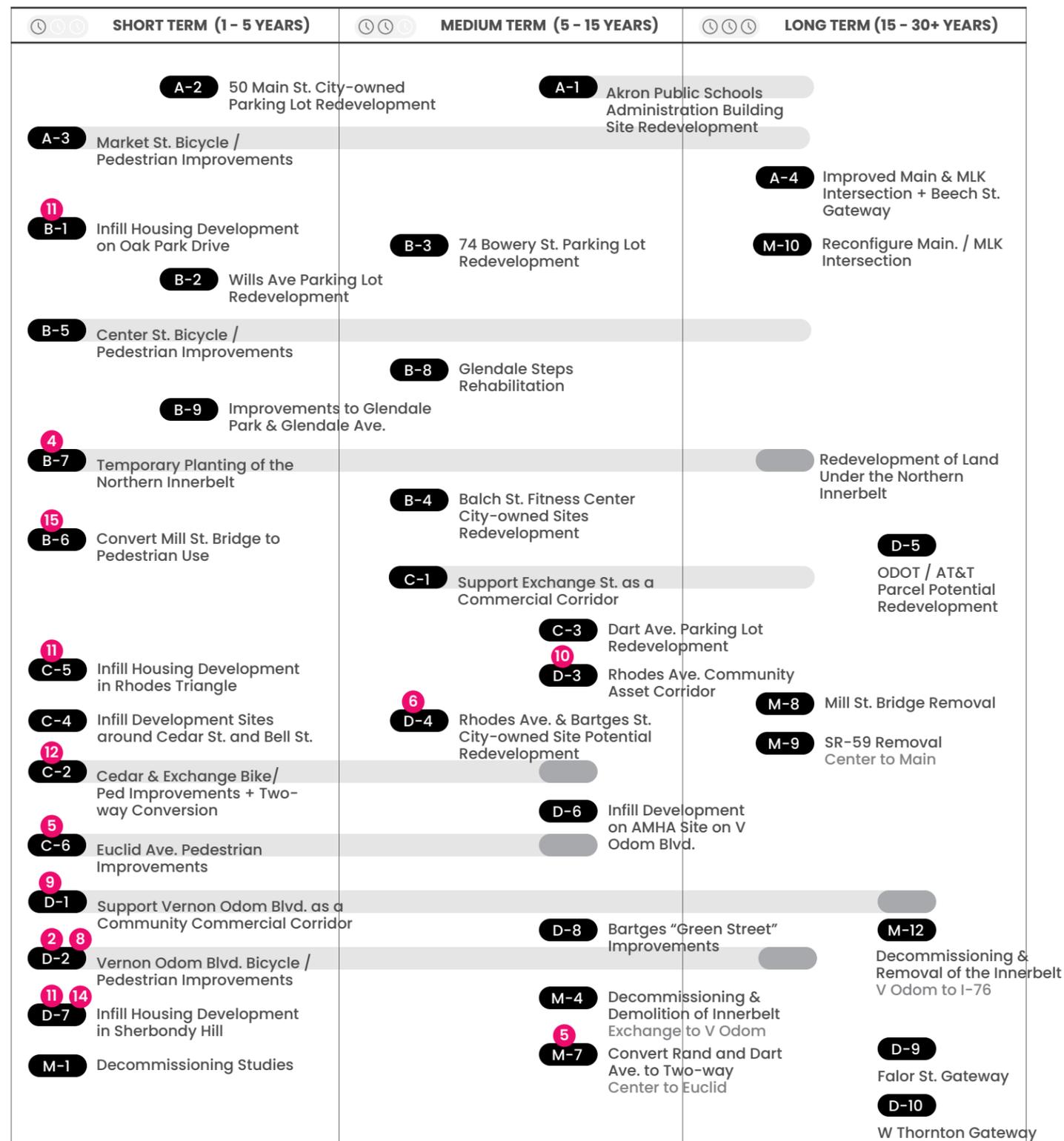
- 🕒 Short-term (1-5 years)
- 🕒🕒 Medium-term (5-15 years)
- 🕒🕒🕒 Long-term (15-30+ years)

Some projects, such as pedestrian/bicycle improvements to Vernon Odom Blvd., have both short- and long-term components.

ZONE	PLACE-BASED PROJECTS	TIMELINE
Market St. Corridor	A-1 Akron Public School Site Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	A-2 50 Main St. City-owned Parking Lot Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	A-3 Market St. Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
	A-4 Improved Main & MLK Intersection + Beech St. Gateway	🕒🕒🕒
Glendale & The Northern Innerbelt	B-1 Infill Housing Development on Oak Park Drive	🕒🕒🕒
	B-2 Wills Ave Parking Lot Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	B-3 74 Bowery St. Parking Lot Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	B-4 Balch St. Fitness Center City-owned Sites Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	B-5 Center St. Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
	B-6 Convert Mill St. Bridge to Pedestrian Use	🕒🕒🕒
	B-7 Transform / Redevelop Land Under the Innerbelt	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
	B-8 Glendale Steps Rehabilitation	🕒🕒🕒
	B-9 Improvements to Glendale Park & Glendale Ave.	🕒🕒🕒
Exchange St. Corridor & Rhodes Triangle	C-1 Support Exchange St. as a Commercial Corridor	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
	C-2 Cedar & Exchange Bike/Ped Improvements + Two-way Conversion	🕒🕒🕒
	C-3 Dart Ave. Parking Lot Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	C-4 Infill Development Sites around Cedar St. and Bell St.	🕒🕒🕒
	C-5 Infill Housing Development in Rhodes Triangle	🕒🕒🕒
	C-6 Euclid Ave. Pedestrian Improvements	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
Sherbondy Hill & The Southern Innerbelt	D-1 Support Vernon Odom Blvd. as a Community Commercial Corridor	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒
	D-2 Vernon Odom Blvd. Bicycle / Pedestrian Improvements	🕒🕒🕒
	D-3 Rhodes Ave. Community Asset Corridor	🕒🕒🕒
	D-4 Rhodes Ave. & Bartges St. City-owned Site Potential Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	D-5 ODOT / AT&T Parcel Potential Redevelopment	🕒🕒🕒
	D-6 Infill Development on AMHA Site on Vernon Odom Blvd.	🕒🕒🕒
	D-7 Infill Housing Development in Sherbondy Hill	🕒🕒🕒
	D-8 Bartges “Green Street” Improvements	🕒🕒🕒
	D-9 Falor St. Gateway	🕒🕒🕒
	D-10 West Thornton Gateway	🕒🕒🕒 - 🕒🕒🕒



# Project Sequencing



## FIRST MOVES

These are the first steps that the City will undertake in the next few years to jumpstart this sequence of projects.

	FIRST MOVES	ESTIMATED COST
1	Trim brush and tree limbs from encroaching on sidewalks on Dart & Rand Ave.	\$ \$\$\$
2	Vernon Odom Blvd. repaving and restriping (scheduled for 2026)	\$ \$\$\$
3	Adoption of Form-based Code in the Master Plan Study Area	\$ \$\$\$
4	Plant Innerbelt berms with wildflowers to reduce mowing Remove Innerbelt pavement and plant with wildflowers	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
5	Paint continental crosswalks at intersections on Dart, Rand, Euclid, Rhodes Ave. and at Zoo entrance	\$ \$\$\$
6	Deep dive on land available for Black Cultural Center	\$ \$\$\$
7	Memorialization / history / public arts grant program	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
8	Plant street trees on Vernon Odom Blvd.	\$ \$\$\$
9	Support existing and new small-scale retail on Vernon Odom Blvd. (with a focus on minority and women owned businesses)	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
10	Rhodes Ave. modular chicanes or speed humps	\$ \$\$\$
11	Infill Housing RFP, with preference for using "Made in Akron" Pre-reviewed Home Plans. Some of these will be affordable if HOME funds are available.  Focus areas of the RFP will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Infill lots on Oak Park Drive</li> <li>Remaining vacant lots on Rhodes and Douglas in the Rhodes Triangle area</li> <li>Sherbondy Hill infill lots – acquire Summit County Land Bank vacant lots or partner with them to develop on their land</li> </ul>	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
12	Cedar/Exchange 1-way to 2-way Conversion Study	\$ \$\$\$
13	Lane Field Park improvements	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
14	Investigate Sherbondy Hill home repair subsidy	\$ \$\$\$
15	Mill St. Bridge pedestrian conversion	\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$
16	Establish community-based governance structure to steward the Innerbelt Master Plan	\$ \$\$\$
17	Continue community engagement, healing, and repair around the Innerbelt	\$ \$\$\$
18	Build capacity to digitize more physical housing records to create a complete history of displacement caused by the Innerbelt	\$ \$\$\$
17	Conduct necessary land evaluation on sites like brownfields to reduce the cost burden of pre-development on potential developers	\$ \$\$\$

A-1

# Akron Public Schools Administration Building Site Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Commercial Development
- Historical Commemoration

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**RELATED PROJECTS**

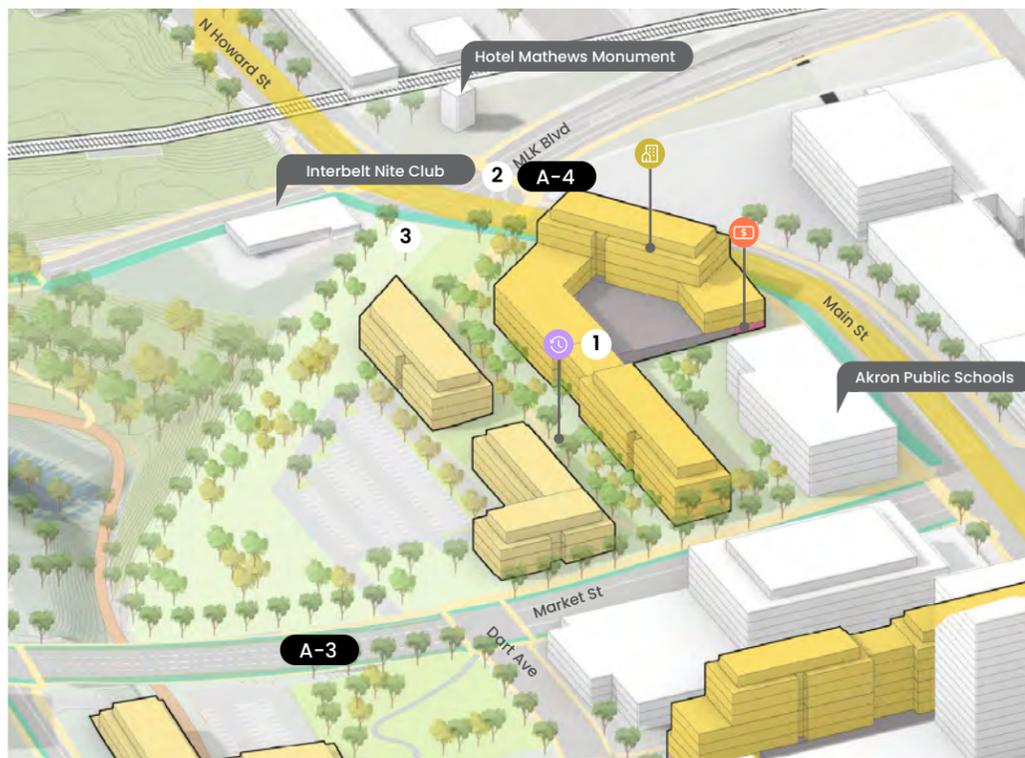
- A-3** Market St. Bike/Ped Improvements
- M-9** SR-59 Removal

**IMPLEMENTATION**

City to partner with APS to explore the redevelopment opportunity

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$



The Akron Public Schools (APS) administration building site can support additional development like mixed-income housing, while still accommodating parking for APS employees and visitors. Constructing buildings along Market St. will screen the parking from view and improve the pedestrian experience on this key corridor spanning the Innerbelt site. Buildings on the northwest edge of the site can take advantage of desirable views of the Ohio & Erie Canal and the green valley to the north.

Redevelopment of the APS site presents the opportunity to restore and commemorate the history of Howard St., the former center of jazz and culture in Akron's Black community that was lost to the construction of the Innerbelt.

**NOTES**

- 1 New open space recreates the historic path of Howard St., offering an opportunity to heal the negative impacts of urban renewal.
- 2 Closure of SR-59 makes the Main St. / MLK Blvd. intersection safer and easier to cross, better connecting the Main St. cycletrack to the Towpath Trail.
- 3 MLK Blvd. traffic will be distributed to Main St. and Dart Ave. through local streets.

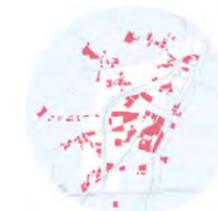
New development can help meet the needs of the community and produce economic benefits that are re-invested in the neighborhood.

Redevelopment of the APS site will require further dialogue and collaboration between the City and Akron Public Schools.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Parking

A-2

# 50 Main St. City-owned Parking Lot Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Commercial Development

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



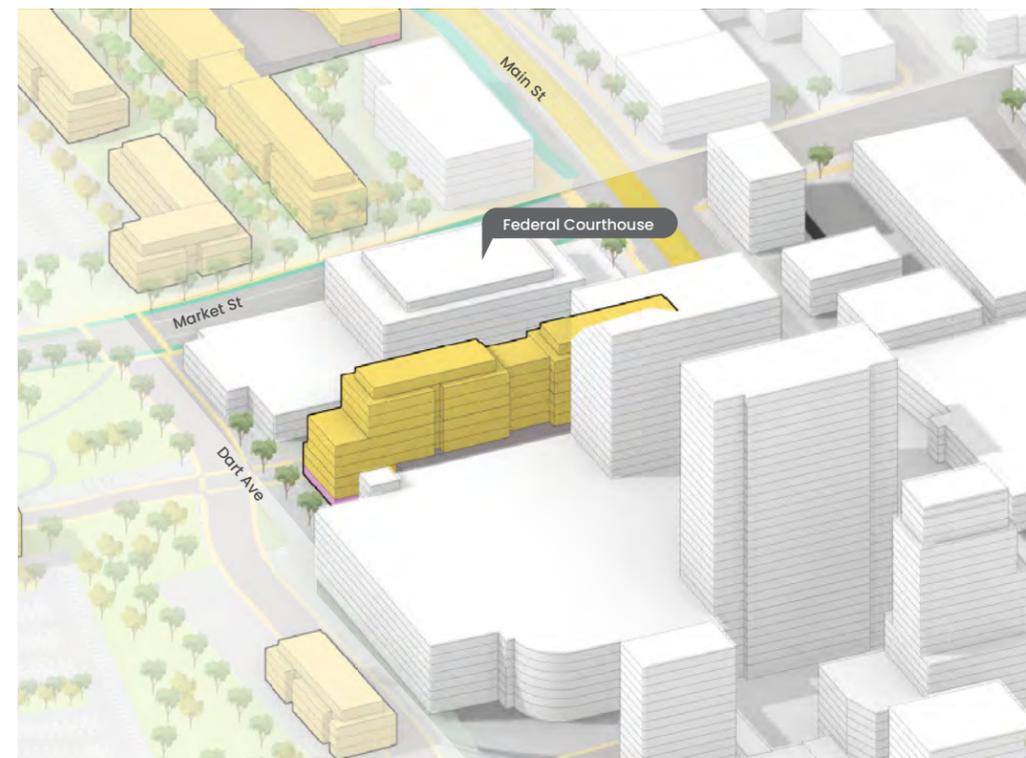
1-5 years

**IMPLEMENTATION**

City to undertake developer solicitation

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$



This City of Akron-owned site presents one of the "first move" redevelopment opportunities that meets the reparative goals of the Innerbelt Master Plan. The site provides an opportunity to link Main St. directly to the Innerbelt site and the Towpath Trail through a new pedestrian or street connection. This connection would reduce the large block size that was created during the "Superblock" urban renewal project of the 1970's and make it easier to get around on foot.

The site is appropriate for mixed-use development with ground floor retail spaces activating the Main St. frontage, and mixed-income housing that overlooks the Innerbelt temporary greenspace.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Parking

A-3

# Market St. Pedestrian / Bike Improvements



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Bicycle Improvements
- Transit Improvements
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure
- New Open Space

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$

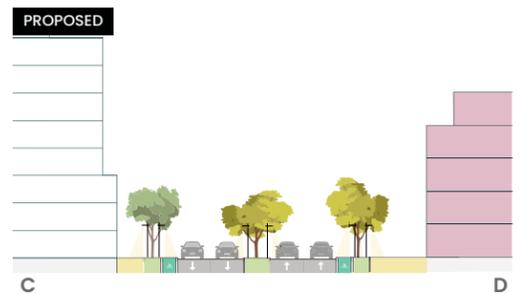
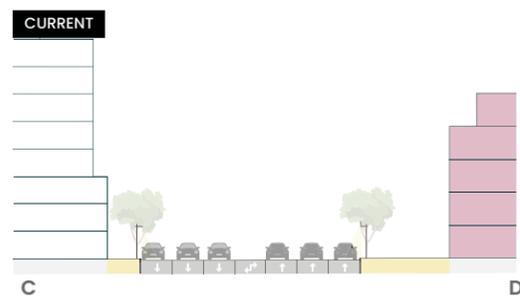


At six-lanes wide, Market St. is oversized and feels unsafe. Reallocating the street width to better balance the needs of all users - vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists - is key to strengthening the east-west connection across the Innerbelt. Short-term changes focus on pedestrian safety, including reducing curb radii and adding more pedestrian crosswalks. Longer-term, bike lanes will be added on Market St. to close the gap between the Maple St. bike lanes and the Main St. cycletrack; and a landscaped median will be added to reduce the road width and calm traffic entering Downtown.

**NOTES**

- 1 Reduce curb radii at the intersection of Market St. with Rand Ave. and Dart Ave. This will slow the speed of turning vehicles, shorten the crossing distance, and increase safety.
- 2 New signalized pedestrian crosswalks at the Rand Ave. intersection.

- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development



- 3 Improved Market St. cross section between Dart Ave. and Main St. calms traffic and enhances walkability.

A-4

# Improve Main & MLK Intersection + Beech St. Gateway



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Improved Gateway

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**RELATED PROJECTS**

- M-9** SR-59 Removal

**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$



Removal of the SR-59/MLK presents the opportunity to reimagine the MLK Blvd./Main St. intersection as a people-friendly gateway into Downtown. Removal of the SR-59 entrance allows the Main St. cycletrack to connect seamlessly into Beech St., the Towpath Trail, and all the recreational assets beyond, positioning this part of Downtown Akron as the "urban gateway to the Cuyahoga Valley". Improvements to the intersection will also allow better access to the Hotel Mathews monument and a stronger connection to the hotel, shopping, and restaurant destinations of the popular Northside District.

**NOTES**

- 1 Future decommissioning of SR-59 presents the opportunity to connect the Main St. cycletrack to the Beech St. trailhead, improving Downtown's access to the Towpath Trail.
- 2 Connection into the Towpath Trail can be further improved with wayfinding, better lighting, and surface improvements to Beech St.
- 3 New public space commemorating the loss of Howard St. to Urban Renewal (see **A-1**) can be connected to the Hotel Mathews monument.

- Bike Lane
- Sidewalk
- Crosswalk
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

B-1

# Infill Housing Development on Oak Park Drive



PROJECT TYPE

Housing

PROJECT LOCATION



TIMELINE



RELATED PROJECTS

**B-5** Center St. Bike/Ped Improvements

IMPLEMENTATION

City to undertake land disposition and developer solicitation, paired with social impact tools to support existing residents and ensure long-term affordability

ESTIMATED COST

\$ \$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$



The area around Oak Park Drive was historically connected to Downtown, but was cut off from easy access by construction of the Innerbelt. This small neighborhood contains many vacant, City-owned sites that can be redeveloped as housing to achieve community repair.

New housing development should include a range of housing types to provide a choice of pricepoints. In addition to single-family detached homes, "Missing Middle" housing types, such as duplexes, townhouses, and small apartment buildings, will help build a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood.

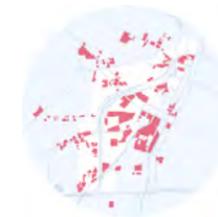
NOTES

The mix of affordable vs. market-rate development is illustrative only. It is meant to illustrate a future vision for this neighborhood that is mixed-income.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)

B-2

# Wills Ave. Parking Lot Redevelopment



PROJECT TYPE

Housing  
 Community Programs

PROJECT LOCATION



TIMELINE



RELATED PROJECTS

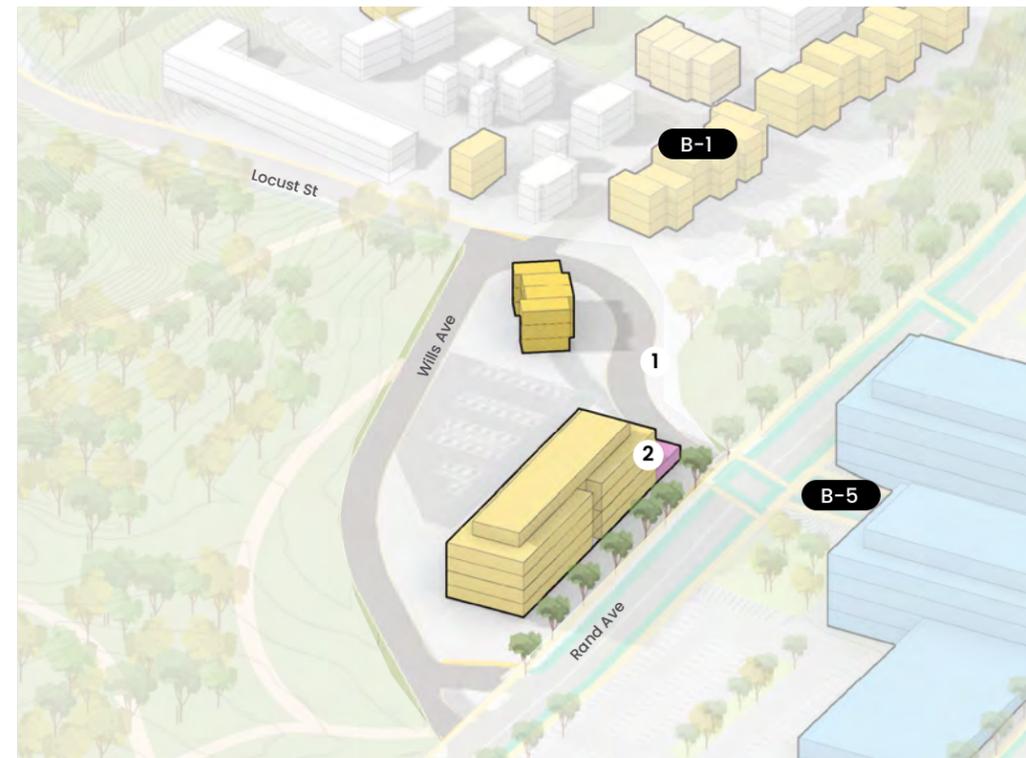
**B-5** Center St. Bike/Ped Improvements

IMPLEMENTATION

City to undertake developer solicitation

ESTIMATED COST

\$ \$\$\$



This City-owned site offers a near-term opportunity to develop mixed-income housing that meets the community's housing goals. The site boasts views of the Downtown skyline and the interim Innerbelt greenspace, and it has easy access to the Towpath Trail. A community use on the ground floor of this development would activate this desolate stretch of Rand Ave. and provide a "bread crumb" of pedestrian activity at the Center St. bridge. Redevelopment would include restoring the connection from Center St. to Locust Ave. that was lost when the Innerbelt was built. This new street or pedestrian path will reconnect the Oak Park neighborhood to Downtown, and also allow access to the Glendale Cemetery greenspace amenity from Downtown.

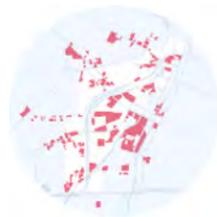
NOTES

- 1 Leverage redevelopment to create a connection from W Center St. to Locust St., improving access to Downtown from West Hill. This could initially be a pedestrian connection that eventually becomes a new street. This work should be coordinated with pedestrian improvements to W Center St. (see Project B-5).
- 2 A community-serving use at the intersection will anchor the pedestrian experience.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Community Uses
- Parking

B-3

# 74 Bowery St. Parking Lot Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Commercial Development

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**SEQUENCING**

- B-5** Center St. Bike/Ped Improvements

**IMPLEMENTATION**

This is a privately-owned site. The City can work with the owner to explore ways to advance this redevelopment vision.

**ESTIMATED COST**



**NOTES**

1 Ensure new development has an active edge along W Center St. and Bowery St (including the provision of a generous public realm). This will complement proposed pedestrian and cycling improvements on Center St. (see Project B-5).

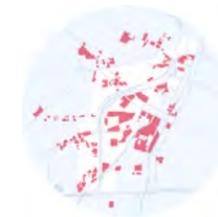
- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Parking

The significant amount of under-utilized parking at 74 Bowery St. presents an important development opportunity. Future redevelopment should reflect the reparative goals of the Innerbelt Master Plan while supporting the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Akron and the growth of the major hospitals nearby. The site can support a variety of programs, including new medical facilities, commerce, and mixed-income housing (perhaps with a tie to health care).

While the City of Akron does not control the site, it can work with the site owners to advance this development vision.

B-4

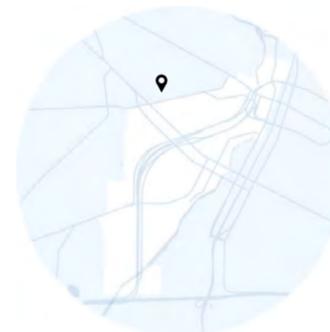
# Balch St. Fitness Center City-owned Sites Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Community Programs

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City to undertake land disposition and developer solicitation

**ESTIMATED COST**

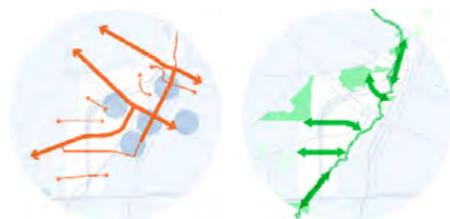


- Bike Lane
- Sidewalk
- Crosswalk
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

The Balch St. Fitness Center has served as a place for community cultural activities in the West Hill neighborhood for nearly 100 years. The underutilized parking lots at the Fitness Center, along with other City-owned vacant sites nearby, can be redeveloped to provide mixed-income housing. The new housing screens the parking lots from the sidewalk, making for a more pleasant and interesting walking experience. Infill housing with front porches and generous front windows provides "eyes on the street" to improve the sense of safety and community in the neighborhood. The new housing benefits from its proximity to services offered by this community hub.

B-5

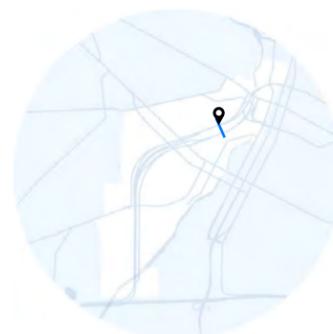
# Center St. Pedestrian & Bike Improvements Short- & Long-term



### PROJECT TYPE

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

### PROJECT LOCATION



### TIMELINE



### IMPLEMENTATION

City-led capital project

### ESTIMATED COST

\$ 555

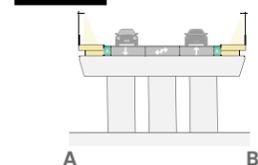


Center St. is an important connection allowing West Hill residents to access Downtown. It also allows Downtown residents, workers, and visitors to access West Hill and the historic Glendale Cemetery greenspace amenity.

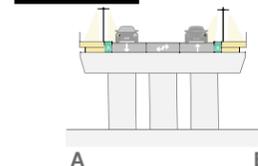
Short-term improvements aim to make the pedestrian experience safer by reducing curb radii and adding crosswalks. In the long-term, Center St. will be a key connecting street in the redeveloped Innerbelt right of way. The oversized vehicular infrastructure should be converted to protected bike lanes or an extension of the Bowery St. cycletrack. Additional landscaping and street trees will shade the sidewalks to improve the pedestrian experience.

### NOTES

#### CURRENT



#### SHORT-TERM



#### LONG-TERM



- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

- Center St. bridge cross section
- Reduced curb radii limit the speed of turning vehicles and increase safety.

B-6

# Convert Mill St. Bridge to Pedestrian Use



### PROJECT TYPE

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

### PROJECT LOCATION



### TIMELINE



### RELATED PROJECTS

- B-9** Glendale Ave. and Glendale Park Improvements

### IMPLEMENTATION

City-led capital project

### ESTIMATED COST

\$ 555 - \$ 555

The Mill St. Bridge currently carries little traffic. In the short-term, it can be closed to cars and repurposed as a pedestrian bridge, providing another safe connection from Downtown to the West Hill neighborhood. This can be paired with short-term improvements to Glendale Park (e.g. temporary events, pop-up markets), supporting the emerging cluster of neighborhood small businesses on Glendale Ave.

In the long term, the Bridge will be removed, opening the land around it for redevelopment.

### NOTES

- Close the "slip" that directs traffic from Mill St. onto Rand Ave.
- Install pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Mill St. and Rand Ave.

- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development



B-7

# Transform Land Under the Innerbelt into Temporary Public Space

## Short-term



**PROJECT TYPE**

- New Open Space
- Historical Commemoration

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project, with support for activation, public art, and placekeeping from Akron's non-profit and philanthropic partners

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$ - \$\$\$



**SHORT TERM**

For the section of the Innerbelt that has been decommissioned and where the City already controls the land, a temporary landscape is proposed. This low-cost, passively-planted landscape will improve the visual and environmental quality of the former Innerbelt, in anticipation of long-term redevelopment.

This interim design includes cover crops and tall fescue plantings in lower-lying areas to aid soil remediation. A new multi-use walkway, wide enough for both pedestrians and service vehicles, would be carved from the existing Innerbelt surface to welcome visitors. Two pedestrian ramps at each end of the Center Street Bridge would provide direct access to the site. Along this

**NOTES**

- 1 Cover crops and tall fescue plantings in low-lying areas to aid soil remediation
- 2 Two pedestrian ramps at each end of Center St. Bridge will provide direct access to the site.

repurposed path, larger squares of existing concrete would be preserved to temporarily house street trees, ensuring optimal sunlight and offering educational opportunities. Local organizations could partner with schools and community groups to teach about tree species being planted throughout the city.

This space can also host art installations that memorialize the impact of the Innerbelt and Urban Renewal on Akron and its neighborhoods.

- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

# Redevelop Land Under the Innerbelt

## Long-term



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Commercial Development
- New Open Space
- Historical Commemoration

**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital projects in concert with private development investment, with support for activation, public art, and placekeeping from Akron's non-profit and philanthropic partners

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$



**NOTES**

- 1 As Akron's economy grows, mixed-income housing and office development can become feasible on the currently decommissioned land of the Innerbelt. Infill development with additional residents helps support Downtown businesses.
- 2 The Towpath Trail can activate new housing developments and provide residents with direct access to this desirable recreational trail amenity.

**LONG TERM**

In the long term, new streets and buildings will be constructed over the temporary landscape. However, several elements will remain. A ribbon of the green landscape will weave through the infill development creating small pocket parks and outdoor spaces that complement the new buildings. The repurposed vehicular path that was originally part of the Innerbelt could be retained to provide back-of-house access to surrounding properties. Finally, the park beneath the former West Mill St. overpass, which is directly aligned with West Mill St., can be a setting for community events, food trucks, and casual gathering, creating an active node that connects West Hill with Downtown.



**Realigning the Towpath**

The Towpath Trail should be realigned to its original historic location. The realignment would offer a gentler slope for cyclists entering Downtown from the north. It also provides an opportunity to make residents and visitors aware of the legacy of the Ohio & Erie Canal and its important role in the founding of Akron.

- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

B-8

# Glendale Steps Rehabilitation



**PROJECT TYPE**

Improved Gateway

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City to work with community-based groups to advance this project

**ESTIMATED COST**

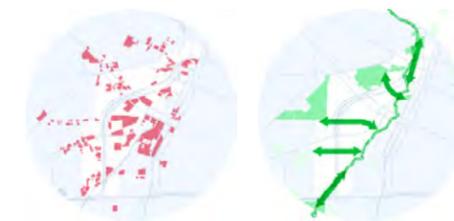
\$ \$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$



The effort to restore this WPA-era landmark, led by Progress Through Preservation in collaboration with the Akron Garden Club, Keep Akron Beautiful, Master Gardeners of Akron, the West Hill CDC, and St. Vincent's and St. Mary's., predates the Innerbelt Master Plan, but the preservation and restoration of this historic asset is a key part of the Master Plan's overall strategy to improve pedestrian connectivity throughout the Innerbelt area.

B-9

# Glendale Park & Glendale Ave. Improvements



**PROJECT TYPE**

Housing  
New Open Space

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**RELATED PROJECTS**

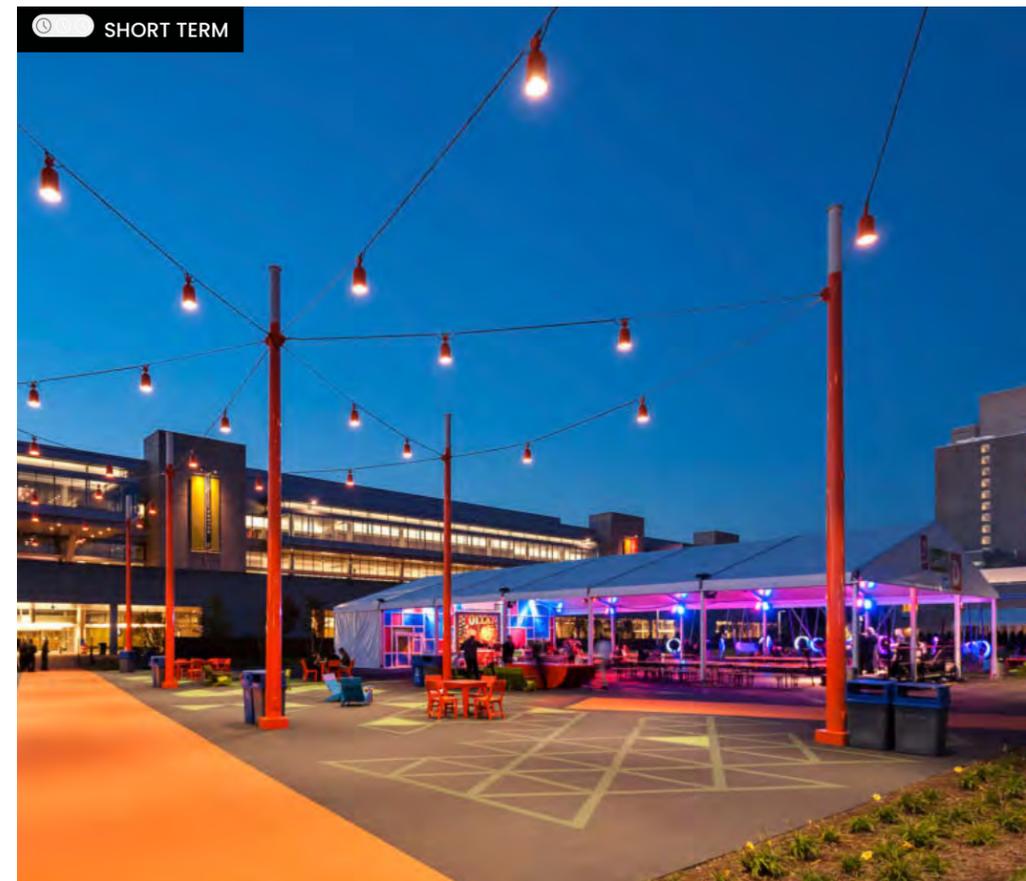
B-6 Convert Mill St. Bridge to a Pedestrian Bridge

**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$\$\$



Glendale Park is a hard-to-access and underutilized City-owned greenspace. To take advantage of this park asset near Downtown, short-term improvements could include temporary activation and programming such as a weekend market or food truck park. Additional activity will help support the fledgling businesses nearby. In the longer term, as the barrier of the Innerbelt is removed and this area becomes better integrated into the rest of the city, Glendale Park's redevelopment potential can be explored, including the possible construction of mixed-income housing to frame the space and help take stewardship of the park.

Glendale Ave. is an important connector between West Hill and Downtown. Providing continuous sidewalks on this street makes walking easier and safer, and enables access to the historic Glendale Steps. Glendale Ave. can also provide a quiet bike connection between Maple St. and Market St.

**The Lawn on D**  
In Boston, the Lawn on D is a flexible, vibrant public hub that supports food trucks, community events, and art exhibitions for the community to enjoy. In the short term, Glendale Park could be activated in a similar, temporary way.

# C-1 Support Exchange St. as a Commercial Corridor



## PROJECT TYPE

Small Business Support

## TIMELINE



## RELATED PROJECTS

C-2 Cedar & Exchange St. Bike/Ped Improvements + 2-way Conversion

## ESTIMATED COST

\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$

## PROJECT LOCATION



This project builds on recent improvements at Exchange and Maple St. to create a walkable, vibrant commercial corridor that supports small business growth. By strengthening connections to the hospitals and Main St. Downtown, the corridor will become a key link between institutions and neighborhoods, encouraging local investment and entrepreneurship.



### 1 Encourage Mixed-use Infill Development Along Exchange St.

Vacant parcels along Exchange St. can be developed into commercial and retail spaces, solidifying Exchange St as an active corridor and destination for the surrounding neighborhoods and providing additional services to residents

### 2 Build on Existing Assets

Exchange St. already has a number of active local businesses. Where there are underutilized existing spaces, renovations and build-outs can create opportunities for small businesses to open, without the need for ground-up development, drawing more people to the corridor and benefiting the existing businesses.

### 3 Use Policy Tools to Support Commercial Corridor & Residential Development

Commercial development along Exchange St. and residential development along Cedar St. can be supported by several local policy tools. The Innerbelt Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district can help support new affordable housing development, while businesses planning services can support entrepreneurs looking to access these new spaces.

### 4 Cedar and Exchange St. Complete Streets Improvements (see Project C-2)

"Complete streets" improvements to Exchange St. and Cedar St. will make them safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, and complement their development into neighborhood commercial corridors.

# C-2 Cedar & Exchange Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements



## PROJECT TYPE

- Sidewalk Improvements
- Two Way Conversion
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

## TIMELINE



## SEQUENCING

C-1 Support Exchange St. as Commercial Corridor

## ESTIMATED COST

\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$

## NOTES

- 1 Reduced curb radii calms turning traffic and reduces the distance pedestrians have walk when crossing the street.
- 2 Provide pedestrian-scale street lighting, and improve lighting in the underpass.

This segment of Cedar St. can be removed, which will further help with traffic calming

"Complete streets" improvements to Exchange St. and Cedar St. will make them safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users, and complement their development into neighborhood commercial corridors.

### LONG TERM: Improving Crossing under the Innerbelt

To better connect West Akron to Downtown across the barrier of the Innerbelt, proposed upgrades include improved lighting in the underpass and safer pedestrian crossing. In the long term, this area will be daylighted with the removal of the Innerbelt.



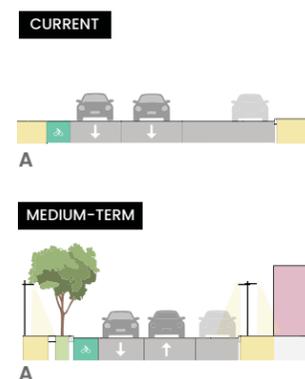
### MEDIUM TERM: Removing the Cedar St. "Slingshot"

The Cedar St. "slip lane" funnels high-speed traffic through the neighborhood. Removing this lane makes Cedar St. more pedestrian-friendly, and opens up city-owned land for neighborhood-serving infill development.



### MEDIUM TERM: Convert Exchange and Cedar to Two-way

Converting these streets from a one-way pair to two-way calms fast-moving traffic, improves safety, and creates an environment that supports a more pedestrian-oriented commercial corridor.



- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

C-3

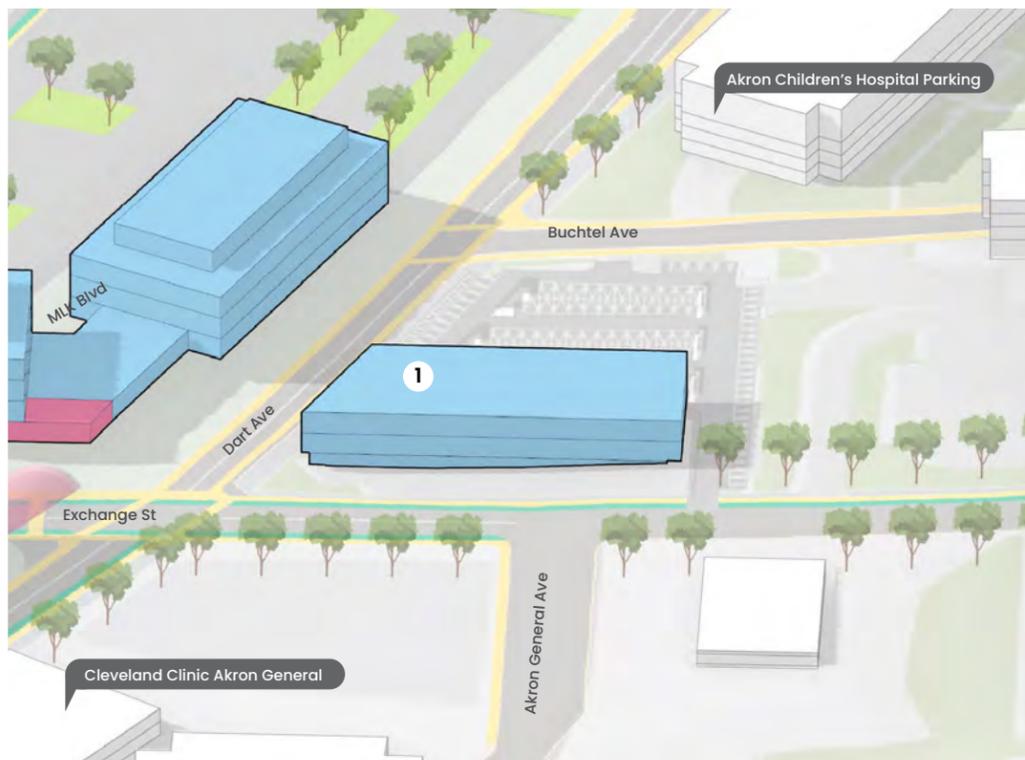
# Dart Ave. Parking Lot Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

Commercial Development

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

This is a privately-owned site. The City can work with the owner to explore ways to advance this redevelopment vision.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$

Redeveloping the underutilized parking lot at this strategic intersection helps to improve the overall experience of Exchange St. and Dart Ave. Updated Form-Based zoning regulations encourage the construction of buildings closer to the street to screen the view of the parking. The zoning also requires more windows facing the street, which makes the pedestrian experience more interesting. Improving the walking experience helps diminish the barrier of the Innerbelt and better connects West Hill to Downtown.

The site is ideally suited for medical facility expansion. Though the City doesn't control the site, it can work with the property owner to advance this development vision.

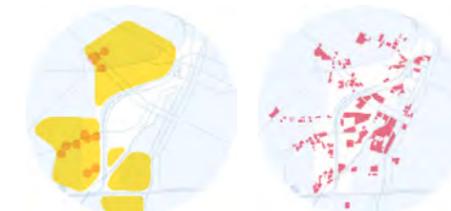
**NOTES**

1 A new building activates the intersection of Dart Ave and Exchange St., with parking available at the existing Children's Hospital parking deck on Buchtel Ave.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Community/ Cultural Use
- Office
- Parking

C-4

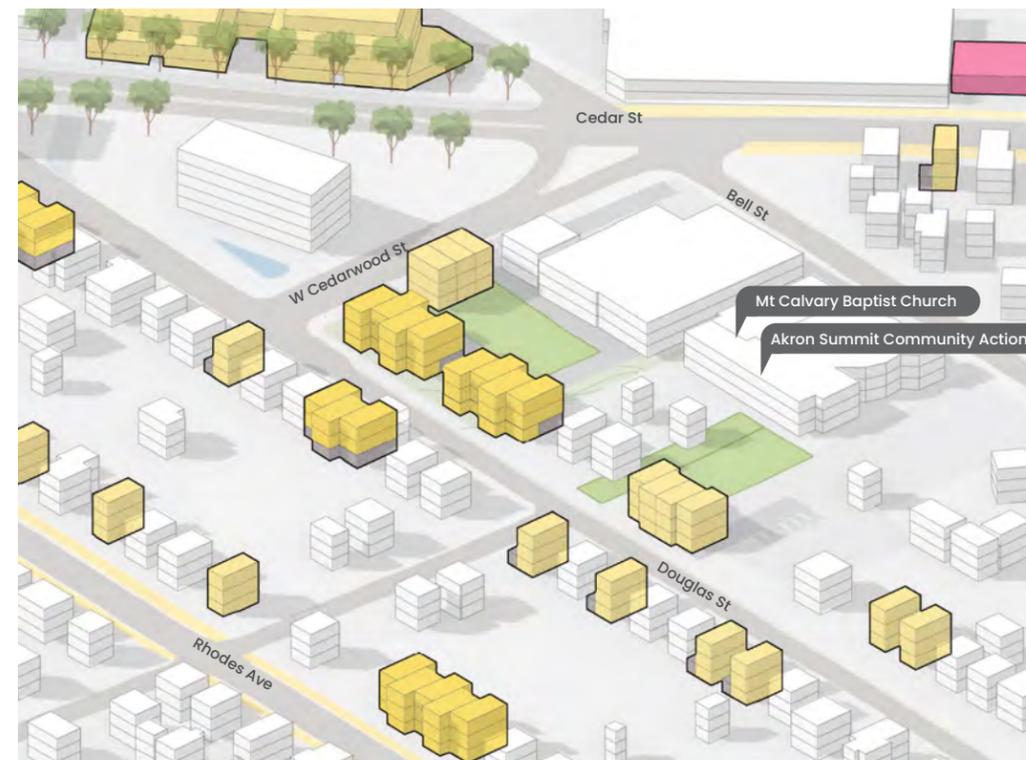
# Infill Development Sites around Cedar St. & Bell St.



**PROJECT TYPE**

Housing

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

This is a site owned by a potential non-profit partner. The City can work with the owner to explore ways to advance this redevelopment vision.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$ - \$\$\$\$

Infill housing development will leverage the adjacent church and community resources. New residential development will include both affordable and market-rate duplexes, townhouses, or small scale apartment buildings. Pocket parks connect nearby residents to the the community assets on Bell St. and Cedar St.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)

C-5

# Infill Housing Development in Rhodes Triangle



**PROJECT TYPE**

Housing

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**

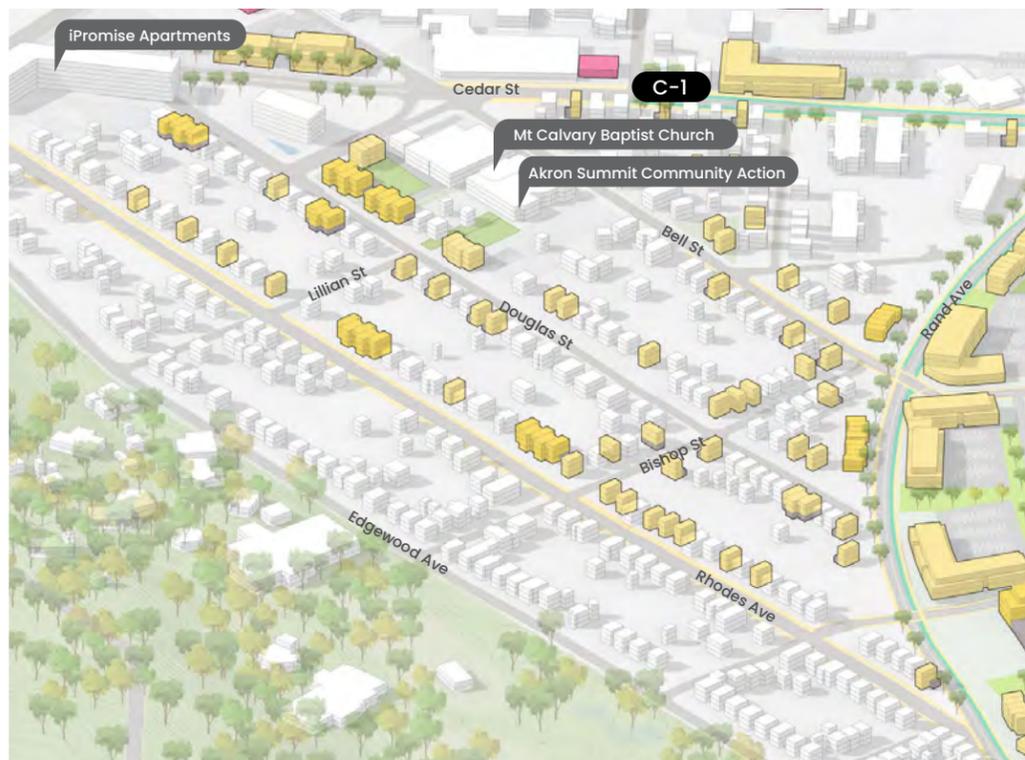


**IMPLEMENTATION**

Potential infill housing sites include lots owned by the City, the Summit County Land Bank, or private owners. The City and its partners can deploy a variety of tools (e.g. tax abatement, land acquisition) to encourage infill development, and these will be paired with tools to support existing residents and ensure long-term affordability.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$\$\$ - \$ \$\$\$



**NOTES**

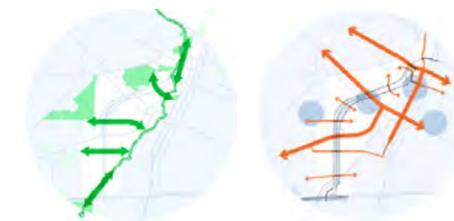
The mix of affordable vs. market-rate development is illustrative only. It is meant to illustrate a future vision for this neighborhood that is mixed-income.

Recently, the Rhodes Triangle area in the Sherbondy Hill neighborhood has successfully attracted investments that turned vacant lots into housing. These investments in quality housing options are putting this area that was negatively impacted by the Innerbelt on a path back to health.

The Master Plan envisions leveraging publicly-owned and privately-owned vacant lots to encourage more infill housing development. This development will be mixed-income and have diverse housing types, including "missing middle" housing such as duplexes and triplexes. Infill housing investment will be paired with measures to support existing residents, prevent displacement, and stabilize and upgrade existing housing stock.

C-6

# Euclid Ave. Pedestrian Improvements



**PROJECT TYPE**

Pedestrian Improvements

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**

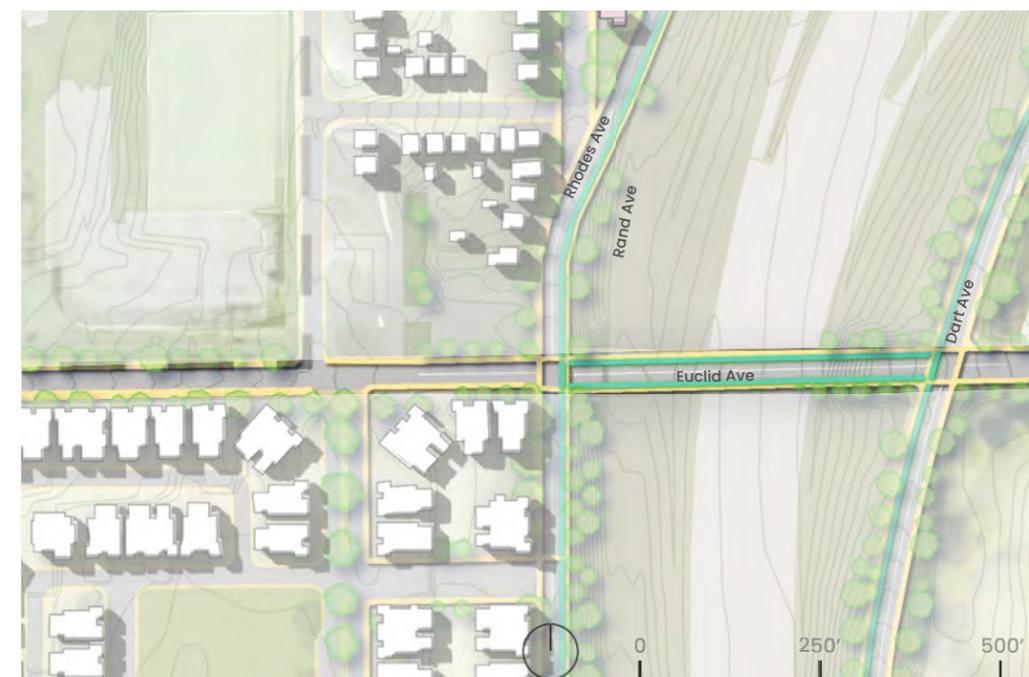


**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$\$\$



- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

Improvements to Euclid Ave. will enable Sherbondy Hill residents to more easily access the Cleveland Clinic Akron General campus and other Downtown destinations by bike or on foot. In the short term, these improvements will include sidewalk repairs, high visibility crosswalks, and reducing the curb radii at the Akron Zoo entrance to calm traffic and make the pedestrian experience safer. In the longer term, Euclid Ave. can be enhanced as a "quiet bike street" for cyclists of all ages and abilities, as called for in the Akron Bike Network Plan. Enhancements will include additional street trees and traffic calming measures. As part of the redevelopment of the decommissioned Innerbelt right of way, the vehicle lanes on the Euclid Ave. bridge will be narrowed and the sidewalks will be widened to improve the travel experience for cyclists and pedestrians.

D-1

# Support Vernon Odom Blvd. as a Vibrant Commercial Corridor



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Small Business Support
- Historical Commemoration

**TIMELINE**



**RELATED PROJECTS**

- D-2 Vernon Odom Blvd. Bike/Ped Improvements

**ESTIMATED COST**



**PROJECT LOCATION**



Vernon Odom Blvd. was formerly known as Wooster Ave., and historically it served as the heart of Black Akron's business and civic life. The street remains an important community corridor in the Sherbondy Hill neighborhood today. Enhancing this corridor as an active, walkable commercial and civic destination has great practical significance in terms of generating equitable economic development in this disinvested area. It also has great symbolic value in repairing the harm caused by the Innerbelt. Supporting this commercial corridor involves leveraging publicly-owned sites for mixed-use infill development, encouraging private investment, supporting existing small businesses, and making improvements to the streetscape and public realm.



**1 Activate Existing Assets**

Existing vacant or under-utilized retail spaces, such as the former Dollar General building on Moon St., can be reconfigured to host new small businesses and bring critical services (like greater access to fresh food) into the neighborhood. This can involve novel retail formats such as temporary pop-up or micro-retail.



Example of a "micro-restaurant proposal" for the Dollar General site

**2 Encourage New Infill Retail Space Development**

The goal is to "fill in the gaps" on Vernon Odom Blvd. with new retail spaces. Proposed Form-Based zoning changes will support storefronts built closer to the sidewalk and with more windows to create an inviting experience for pedestrians.

**3 Create a More Attractive Streetscape**

"Complete Streets" improvements will create a more walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment that is more conducive to retail.

**4 Use Policy Tools to Support Commercial Corridor Development**

Places like the nearby Akron Urban League Minority Business Assistance Center can support new commercial development along Vernon Odom Blvd. through programs providing legal, administrative, and business planning services.

Read more about Social Impact Tools that support small businesses on page 164.

D-2

# Vernon Odom Blvd. Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements



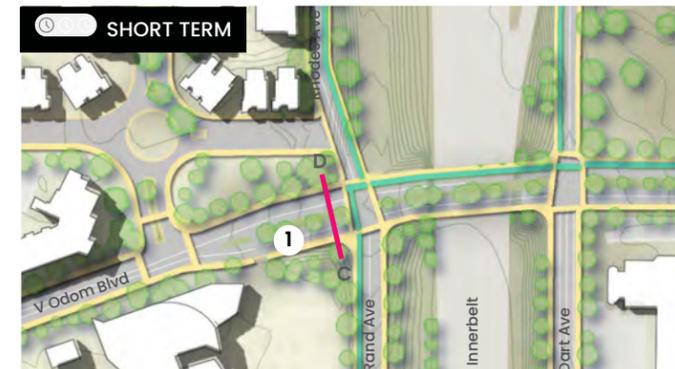
Complete Streets improvements on Vernon Odom Blvd. are intended to complement the vision of an active community commercial corridor, and improve east-west connections across the Innerbelt.

**SHORT TERM**

In the short term, improvements include planting street trees, reducing curb radii, and new crosswalks, which provide safer pedestrian access to key community anchors like the Helen Arnold Community Learning Center and Odom Blvd. Branch Library.

**LONG TERM**

In the long term, wider sidewalks, on-street parking, improved landscape elements, lighting, and a grade-separated bike lane will transform Vernon Odom Blvd. into a community destination.



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Sidewalk Improvements
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

**TIMELINE**



**RELATED PROJECTS**

- D-1 Support Vernon Odom Blvd. as Commercial Corridor

**ESTIMATED COST**



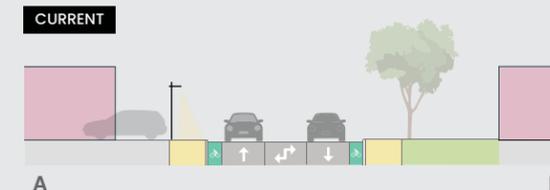
**NOTES**

- New street trees and reduced curb radii will slow down traffic and increase pedestrian safety.
- Install new sidewalks, separated bike lane, on-street parking, and green infrastructure.

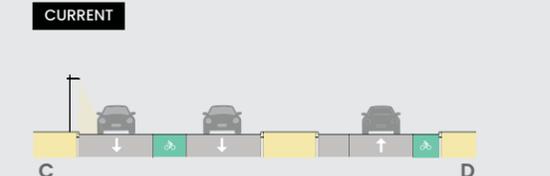
- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

**VERNON ODOM STREET SECTIONS**

Between Raymond St and Mallison Ave.



Near Rhodes Ave.



D-3

# Rhodes Ave. Community Asset Corridor

PROJECT TYPE

Pedestrian Improvements

PROJECT LOCATION



TIMELINE



IMPLEMENTATION

City-led capital project

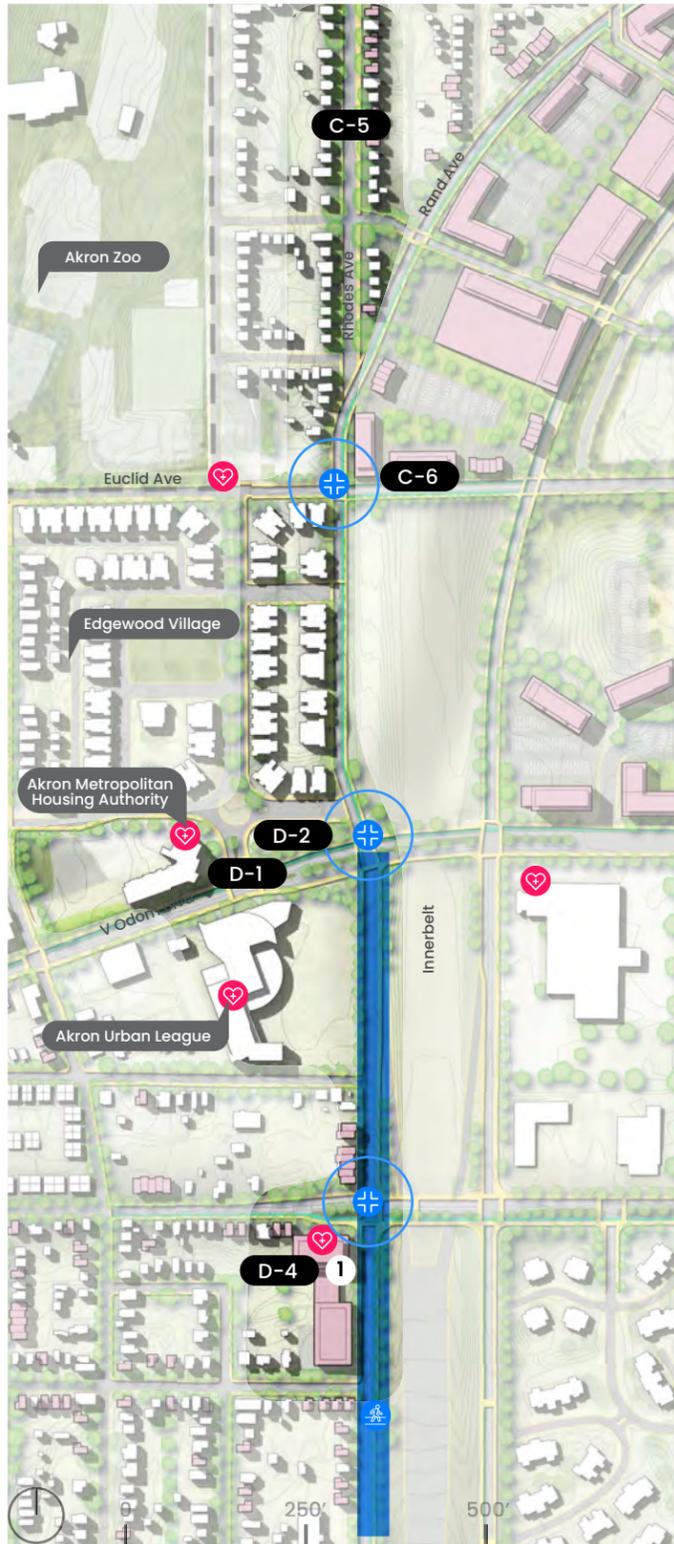
ESTIMATED COST



NOTES

1 Rhodes Ave. & Bartges St. City-owned Site Potential Redevelopment (see Project D-4)

This City-owned parcel adds another asset to the Rhodes Avenue community corridor.



This “community asset corridor” aims to better connect residents to existing and future community assets and anchors west of the Innerbelt. Currently, the vehicle lanes on Rhodes Ave. are overly wide, which encourages speeding. Improvements such as wider sidewalks with street trees, lighting, crosswalks, and traffic calming devices will make it safer for residents to access amenities and resources offered at nearby locations like the Akron Zoo, Urban League, and Helen Arnold Community Learning Center.

Improve safety at key crossings in the near term with temporary traffic calming elements such as modular bumpouts and raised crosswalks. Permanent safety solutions include narrowing vehicle lanes, concrete curb bumpouts, and conversion to two-way traffic.

Improve lighting and sidewalk maintenance, particularly on Rhodes Ave. south of Vernon Odom Blvd. where there is very fast-moving traffic.

- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development



D-4

# Rhodes Ave. & Bartges St. Site Potential Redevelopment

PROJECT TYPE

Commercial Development  
 Community & Cultural Use

PROJECT LOCATION



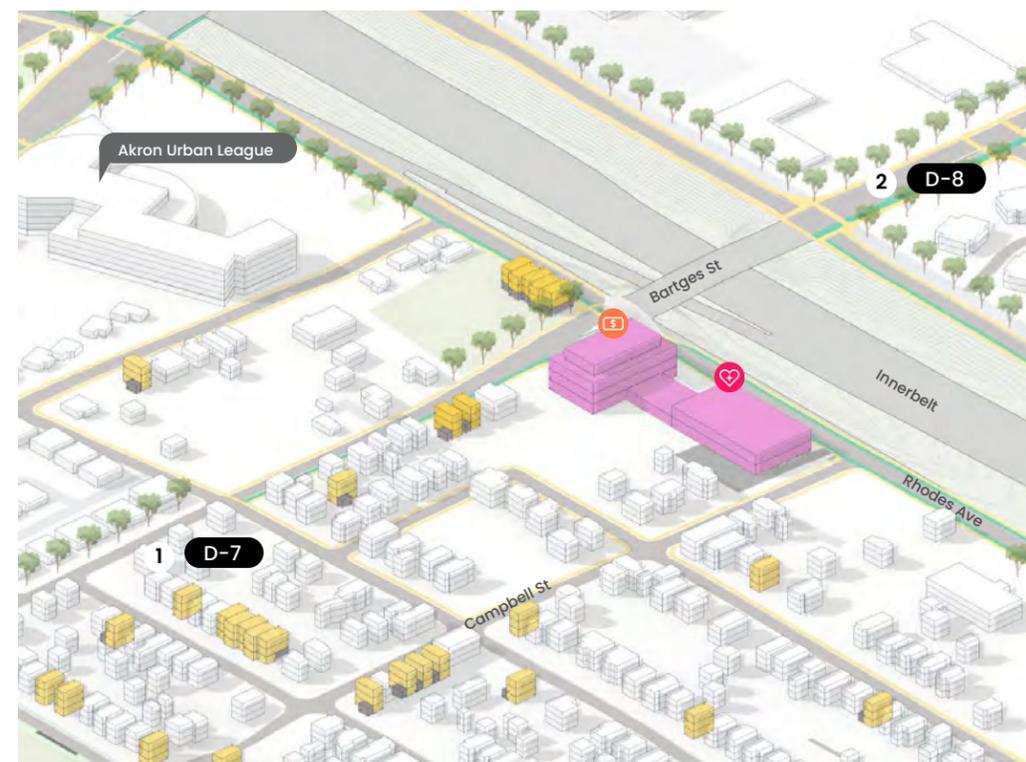
TIMELINE



IMPLEMENTATION

The City can work with community groups such as AROPI to explore short-term activation of the site as well as possibilities for long-term redevelopment that benefits the neighborhood.

ESTIMATED COST

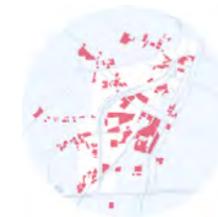


This City-owned parcel provides a potential location for a community facility (such as a new Black Cultural Center). Development preserves existing trees and creates a visual anchor across the Innerbelt to improve connections between neighborhoods.

NOTES

- 1 The redevelopment of the site can anchor and catalyze future complementary retail and housing development in Sherbondy Hill.
- 2 The redevelopment of the site will anchor the experience of Bartges St., a future “green street” that will connect Sherbondy Hill residents to the Towpath Trail in a safe, comfortable environment (see project D-8).

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Community & Cultural Use



D-5

# ODOT / AT&T Site Potential Redevelopment



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing
- Commercial Development
- Community Programs

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**

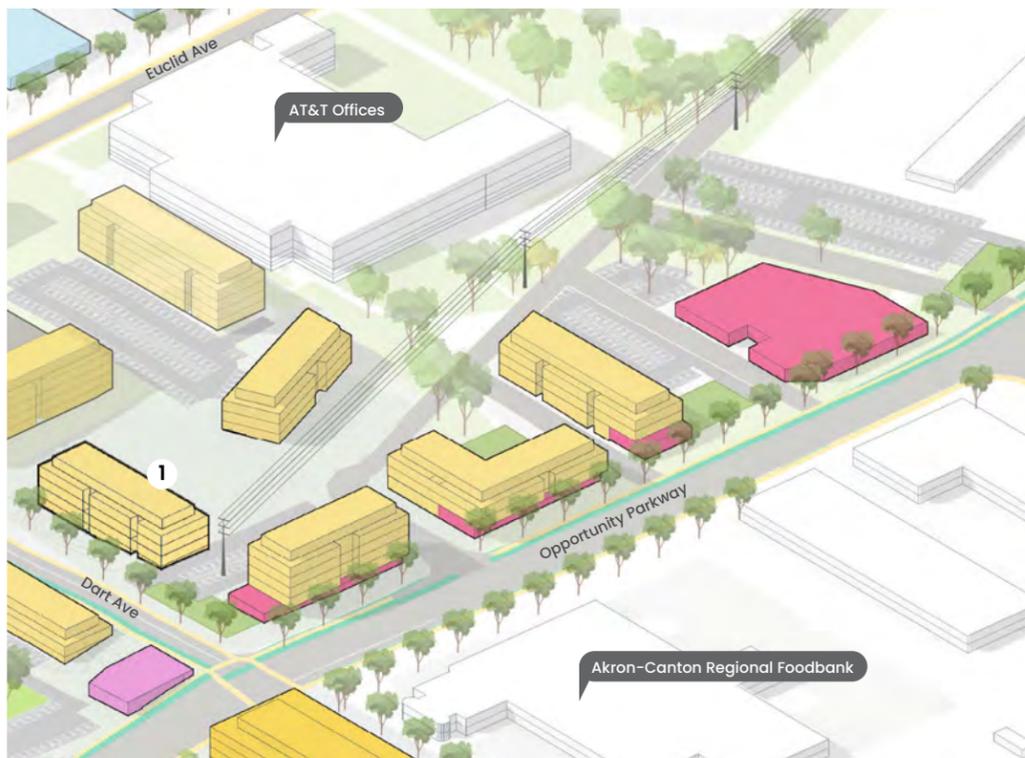


**IMPLEMENTATION**

This site mixes private ownership with land owned by ODOT (which the City hopes to take control of in the long term). The City can work with the owner to explore ways to advance this redevelopment vision.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$



This Innerbelt-adjacent development opportunity proposes to subdivide the underutilized southern portion of a large parcel owned by AT&T, and combine it with the land under the future decommissioned Innerbelt loop ramp at the northeast corner of Dart Ave. and Opportunity Parkway, which is currently owned by ODOT. The large size of the combined site offers the potential for large employment uses or large-scale mixed-use housing development. The new buildings can memorialize the alignment of the historic Wooster Ave. right-of-way which still runs diagonally through the site.

**NOTES**

1 Based on the long term decommissioning plan for the Innerbelt, development could expand into areas currently owned by ODOT

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Community / Cultural Use
- Office
- Parking

D-6

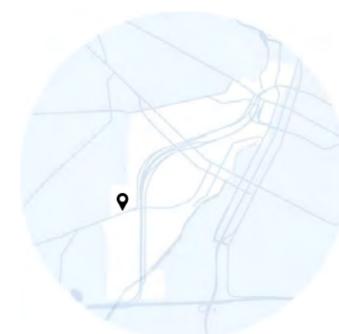
# Infill Development on AMHA-owned Vernon-Odom Blvd. Site



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Housing

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**

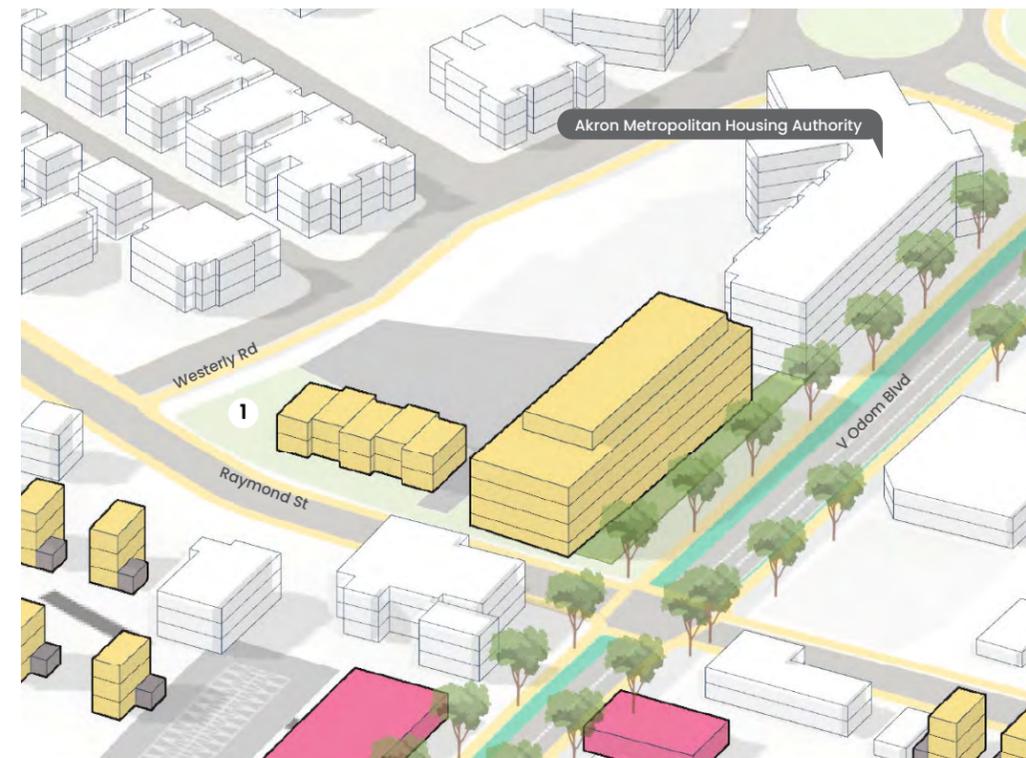


**IMPLEMENTATION**

City to partner with AMHA to explore this redevelopment opportunity

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$\$\$\$



The large site owned by AMHA along Vernon Odom Blvd. offers the opportunity for future affordable or mixed-income housing development. New residents can walk to the expanding commercial development on Vernon Odom Blvd. and take advantage of the Metro RTA bus service on this corridor to reduce transportation expenses.

**NOTES**

1 The site retains some existing open space, providing greenspace for use by surrounding residents.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail
- Parking

D-7

# Infill Housing Development in Sherbondy Hill



**PROJECT TYPE**

Housing

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

Potential infill housing sites are owned by the City, the Summit County Land Bank, and private owners. The City and its partners can deploy a variety of tools (e.g. tax abatement, land acquisition) to encourage infill development, and these will be paired with tools to support existing residents and ensure long-term affordability.

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$\$\$ - \$\$\$



Sherbondy Hill has a significant number of vacant sites, including those owned by the City, the Summit County Land Bank, and private owners. Leveraging these vacant sites for infill housing development will spur investment in the area, provide more high-quality, mixed-income housing options to residents, and restore economic vitality to an area that has been negatively impacted by the Innerbelt.

As in Rhodes Triangle, the Master Plan envisions housing developments that are mixed-income and diverse in terms of housing types, especially including “missing middle” types such as duplexes and triplexes.

**NOTES**

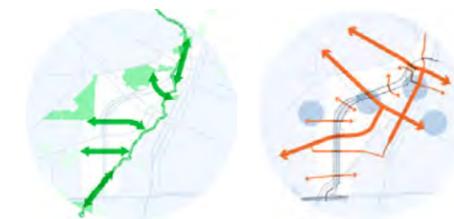
The mix of affordable vs. market-rate development is illustrative only. It is meant to show a future vision for this neighborhood that is mixed-income.

Given the disinvestment in the existing housing stock, new housing investment will be paired with policies and programs to support existing residents, prevent displacement, and stabilize and upgrade the condition of existing housing units.

- Residential (Affordable)
- Residential (Market-rate)
- Commercial / Retail

D-8

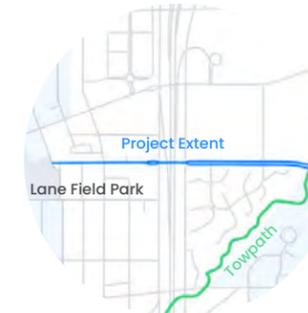
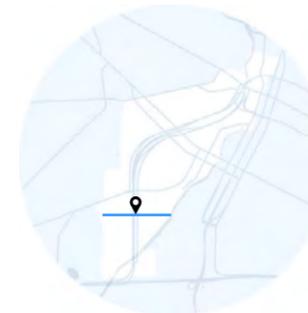
# Bartges “Green Street” Improvements



**PROJECT TYPE**

- Pedestrian Improvements
- Bicycle Improvements
- Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$\$\$ - \$\$\$



Bartges St. will become a key east-west green spine that spans from Lane Field Park on the western end to Broadway St. on the east. It will enable Sherbondy Hill residents to better access the Towpath Trail, Freedom Trail, and the RKP Transit Center.

West of the Innerbelt, Bartges St. already has a pedestrian-friendly scale, which should be enhanced with additional street trees. East of the Innerbelt, Bartges St. is oversized for the amount of vehicular traffic on it. This offers an opportunity for the southern two vehicle lanes to be turned over to pedestrians and cyclists, providing a pleasant, tree-lined environment for recreational access (see street section). In the short-term, this can be accomplished using paint and bollards to close the lanes to vehicular traffic. Longer-term, the southern lanes would be removed and

**CURRENT**



**PROPOSED**



- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

replaced by a bike and pedestrian path and landscaping. Removal of this excess road pavement will reduce long-term maintenance and paving costs. Finally, the Bartges St. bridge is currently overly wide at 5 lanes. Some of the travel lanes should be reallocated to pedestrians and cyclists.

D-9

# Falor St. Gateway



**PROJECT TYPE**

Improved Gateway

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$ \$ \$

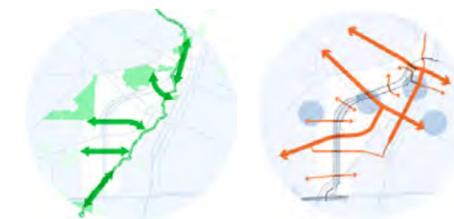


- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

The Falor St. Bridge spans the Ohio & Erie Canal and provides an important pedestrian link from Opportunity Parkway to South Main Street. This connection allows residents in Sherbondy Hill to access opportunities at Canal Place, Bounce Innovation Hub, and Downtown. In the short-term, this pedestrian connection can be enhanced with better paving, lighting, and wayfinding signage. In the longer-term, a new vehicular bridge could be built across the Canal to further improve access and restore a missing part of the historical street grid.

D-10

# West Thornton Gateway



**PROJECT TYPE**

Improved Gateway  
Street Trees & Green Infrastructure

**PROJECT LOCATION**



**TIMELINE**



**IMPLEMENTATION**

City-led capital project

**ESTIMATED COST**

\$ \$ \$ \$



- Bike Lane
- Pedestrian
- Road / Parking
- Future Development

W Thornton St. under the Innerbelt overpass provides an opportunity for direct connection to the Towpath Trail. Improved underpass lighting and crosswalks will make it safer and more comfortable for residents to take advantage of this opportunity. In the long term, as more of the Innerbelt right of way is redeveloped, the City can explore options to better leverage the underpass for activation and shared public use such as weekend markets.

**APPENDIX B**

**Catalog of  
Social Impact  
Tools**

# Social Impact Tools

This Master Plan envisions a future where the physical repair and reconnection of the Innerbelt area is paired with the restoration of community power and investment in the most heavily impacted neighborhoods. To accomplish this, in addition to “spatial” investments in new development and infrastructure improvements, the Master Plan mobilizes non-spatial tools – funding, policies, programs, and capacity-building – designed to provide support for residents and create positive social impact in the neighborhoods: more economic opportunities, greater housing affordability and stability, enhanced community health and wellbeing, and the celebration of history and culture. These social impact tools, combined with the place-based projects described earlier in the Master Plan, collectively serve to advance the community’s goals for repair.

Similar to the place-based projects, not all of these tools rely on City of Akron resources alone. Many local funding, policy, and programmatic

resources already exist, overseen by non-profit, philanthropic, and other government stakeholders; the City’s role is to build on, leverage, and coordinate these resources. For some key tools, the plan includes descriptions of how these existing resources can be coordinated (see “How the Tool Can Be Designed and Deployed” under each tool).

## Using This Catalog

This catalogue comprises social impact tools that can potentially be deployed in the Innerbelt area. For each tool, the catalogue describes the community goals it relates to, as well as existing Akron-based resources and capacities that can be aligned to deliver these tools. Several high-priority social impact tools are highlighted and described in greater detail.

The network of small business assistance providers serving Akron is evolving continuously. Connect with any provider to support you in navigating the network, and visit [greaterakronbusinessnavigator.org](http://greaterakronbusinessnavigator.org). This catalog identifies some of these providers, but should not be considered a complete list.

Tools	Tool Description	RELATED COMMUNITY GOALS	Resource & Capacity
T-1	Small business loans and funding for investment in business expansion	<p>Provides low-interest loans and other funding so small businesses can buy equipment, hire staff, or expand in and around the Innerbelt. The goal is to help local and Black-owned businesses grow and create stable jobs.</p>	<p> <b>03</b></p> <p><b>Support the growth of local and Black-owned businesses</b></p> <p>Tools would provide loans, mentorship, training, and affordable retail spaces to help small and minority-owned businesses thrive. These tools aim to bolster existing work by organizations like the Summit Medina Business Association, Akron Urban League Entrepreneurship Empowerment Center, and Bounce Innovation Hub, and connect more Akronites to these resources.</p>
T-2	Business planning, legal and administrative training & advisory services	Offers one-on-one and group support on business planning, legal questions, and day-to-day administration. This helps new and existing entrepreneurs run their businesses more confidently and avoid costly mistakes.	<p>Summit Medina Business Association (SMBA) SBA Loans Akron Urban League Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC) Akron Urban League Entrepreneurship Empowerment Center Western Reserve Community Fund (WRCF) Development Finance Authority (DFA) Ohio Department of Development Minority Business Division City of Akron Great Streets Program Hebrew Free Loan Association (HFLA) ECDI Economic &amp; Community Development Institute (ECDI) JobsOhio Small Business Grant</p>
T-3	Affordable neighborhood retail space for small businesses	Creates affordable spaces – storefronts, pop-up, or temporary spaces – where small businesses can test ideas and reach customers without taking on high rent. This lowers the barriers for local and Black-owned businesses to have a visible presence in the neighborhood.	<p>EANDC DFA Examples of this work in Akron: Well CDC (Akron Food Works commercial kitchen) The Well Middlebury Storefronts Downtown Akron Partnership (Start Downtown Program) Northside Marketplace City of Akron (CDBG; Akron Great Streets)</p>
T-4	Small business networking and resource marketing	Connects small business owners to one another and to available resources through events, meet-ups, and shared marketing. Stronger networks make it easier for entrepreneurs to learn, collaborate, and access support.	<p>Black Chamber of Commerce of Summit County Copley Road Merchants Association Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce Small Business Division City of Akron Bounce Innovation Hub Greater Summit County Minority Business Association</p>
T-5	Angel investor outreach, crowdfunding and fundraising advisory	Helps entrepreneurs tap into angel investors, crowdfunding platforms, and fundraising campaigns. These services expand access to capital beyond traditional bank loans, especially for businesses that have been historically overlooked.	<p> <b>02</b></p> <p><b>Support local entrepreneurs that are starting new businesses</b></p> <p>These tools expand on small business support by helping up-and-coming entrepreneurs access the tools, space, and mentorship needed to launch and grow new ventures. It strengthens existing ecosystems and ensures entrepreneurs, especially those from historically excluded communities, can participate in redevelopment.</p>
T-6	Training, mentorship and support services for entrepreneurs	Pairs entrepreneurs with mentors and training programs that build skills in finance, marketing, operations, and leadership. The goal is to help new businesses survive their early years and grow over time.	<p>Economic &amp; Community Development Institute (ECDI) JobsOhio Growth Loan Fund Western Reserve Community Fund</p>
T-7	Affordable and flexible office, incubator or commercial space	Provides flexible office, co-working, and incubator space that can be shared by multiple small businesses. These spaces offer lower-cost desks, meeting rooms, and support services that make it easier to start and grow a business.	<p>Economic &amp; Community Development Institute (ECDI) Akron Urban League Entrepreneurship Empowerment Center Mortar Program University of Akron Greater Akron Chamber Small Business Division</p>
T-8	Networking organizations for entrepreneurs	Supports networking that bring entrepreneurs together across Akron. These networks create peer support, open doors to new opportunities, and help build a culture of local ownership.	<p>Bounce Innovation Hub Akron-Summit County Public Library Microbusiness Center The Well CDC</p>
			<p>Black Chamber of Commerce of Summit County Greater Summit County Minority Business Association Greater Akron Chamber Bounce Innovation Hub</p>

T-9	Financing & tax-incentives for developers and employers that meet specific local hiring goals	Uses public financing tools and tax incentives to encourage developers and employers to create good jobs for Akron residents, especially nearby neighborhoods. In exchange for public support, projects commit to local hiring and other community benefits.	 <b>02</b> <b>Grow quality job opportunities and support Akronites in accessing them</b> These tools focus on developing quality jobs for Akronites through employer incentives, job fairs, career placement services, and co-located workforce development facilities. These approaches aim to reduce barriers to employment and connect residents to good-paying, long-term opportunities.	Development Finance Authority (DFA) City of Akron County of Summit
T-10	Job fair and employee placement support services for employers	Organizes job fairs and connects employers directly with local job-seekers. These services make it easier for residents to find work and for businesses to hire from the surrounding community.		County of Summit Ohio Means Jobs Center Bounce Innovation Hub Akron-Summit County Public Library
T-11	Identification of real estate opportunities for new employers	Identifies vacant or underused buildings and sites that could host new employers. By matching companies with suitable spaces, this tool attracts jobs and investment into Innerbelt-area neighborhoods.		Downtown Akron Partnership Progressive Alliance Better Kenmore City of Akron County of Summit
T-12	Local business organizations that advocate for new jobs and resources	Supports Chambers of Commerce and similar groups that advocate for job-creating investments in Akron and ensure that business growth aligns with community needs and brings new opportunities to residents.		Elevate Greater Akron Black Chamber of Commerce of Summit County Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce Kenmore Chamber of Commerce
T-13	Coordination of available funding for workforce development programs	Brings together different workforce funding streams into a coordinated package for training programs. This helps stretch limited dollars further and makes it easier for residents to access job training without navigating a maze of programs.	 <b>02</b> <b>Grow quality job opportunities and support Akronites in accessing them</b> Workforce development strategies include job training, certification programs, and career readiness resources targeted at young people and adults looking to upskill. Located within or near the Innerbelt, these efforts support long-term economic mobility and ensure residents can access new opportunities.	County of Summit Ohio Means Jobs Center Conxus NEO Stark State College
T-14	Engineering recruitment and career programs for local high schools	Partners with schools and employers to expose high school students to engineering and related careers. The goal is to build a pipeline of local talent for quality, future-oriented jobs.		Akron Public Schools County Summit Ohio Means Jobs Project Grad The University of Akron EXL Center Community Internship Program
T-15	Neighborhood-based locations for workforce development facilities	Locates workforce training and job-readiness programs in neighborhood sites rather than distant campuses. This makes services easier to reach by foot, bus, or bike and better connects residents to training and employment.		Open M Employment Services County of Summit Ohio Means Jobs Center Conxus NEO
T-16	Employee Carpool Coordination Program	Encourages co-workers who live near each other to share rides to major job centers. A carpool coordination program can save families money and improve access to jobs for people without reliable transportation.		The Well CDC Summit Education Initiative
T-17	Grants, loans and tax-incentives for renovation of existing affordable housing	Provides grants, loans, and tax incentives to repair and update existing affordable housing, keeping older owner-occupied and rental homes safe, livable, and affordable for current residents and preventing their displacement.	 <b>05</b> <b>Prevent displacement of existing residents, and support their housing needs</b> Tools like repair grants, tax relief, homebuyer education, and land trusts help prevent displacement and preserve affordability for current residents. This approach focuses on protecting people already living in neighborhoods impacted by the Innerbelt and ensuring they benefit from redevelopment.	City of Akron DFA WRCF Affordable Housing Trust Fund Ohio Dept. of Development - Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF) Federal Home Loan Bank Community Investment Program (CIP) & Zero Interest Fund (ZIF)
T-18	Support and advocacy services for renters and low-income homeowners	Offers counseling, legal support, advocacy, and utility assistance for renters and low-income homeowners facing eviction, unsafe housing, or rising costs. These services help families stay in their homes and understand their rights.		City of Akron Housing & Community Services Division Utility Providers Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
T-19	Real estate tax abatements for low-income homeowners and low-cost rental	Uses tax abatements and similar tools to lower property tax burdens for low-income homeowners and landlords who keep rents affordable. The goal is to prevent displacement as neighborhood investment increases.		City of Akron Utility Bill Assistance Program
T-20	Tenant and resident advocacy organizations	Supports tenant unions and resident-led organizations that advocate for fair housing conditions and policies. Stronger tenant voices help prevent abuse, improve housing quality, and shape local decision-making.		Summit County Housing Needs Assessment

T-21	Tax abatements or Tax Increment Financing for new affordable rental housing development	Uses tax abatements to help pay for the construction of new affordable rental housing. Future increases in property tax revenue are reinvested to keep homes affordable for lower-income residents.	<p><b>06</b></p> <p><b>Promote new supply of mixed-income rental housing</b></p> <p>Tools like tax abatements, TIF, land contributions, and state and local funding can support new affordable rental housing development. These efforts are paired with services to ensure new homes are accessible and responsive to community needs.</p>	City of Akron TIF Ohio Housing Finance Agency Ohio Department of Development Historic Tax Credits, Housing Trust Fund Community Development Finance Fund Program - Pre-Development Grant Program Citywide Residential Tax Abatement - Ohio Community Reinvestment Area
T-22	Training and support programs for small, local housing developers	Provides training, coaching, and sometimes capital to help small and local developers take on housing projects. This broadens who can participate in development and keeps more of the benefits within the community.		Akron Urban League Entrepreneurship Empowerment Center Homebuilders Association of Portage and Summit Counties
T-23	Public land contributions to lower cost of affordable housing development	Allows the City to contribute publicly owned land at reduced cost to affordable housing projects. Lower land costs make it easier to build quality homes that stay affordable over the long term.		City of Akron
T-24	Advocacy for changes to State funding criteria	Organizes local voices to push for state funding rules that better support affordable housing and neighborhood investment in places like Akron. Changing these criteria can unlock more resources for communities historically left out.		
T-25	Home repair and residential lot acquisition funding	Offers grants and loans for home repairs and for purchasing and assembling small residential lots. These investments help current residents improve their homes and create new opportunities for infill housing.	<p><b>07</b></p> <p><b>Promote new supply of mixed-income homeownership options, and broaden pathways to homeownership</b></p> <p>By reducing barriers to ownership through education, subsidies, and alternative models like community land trusts, these tools help Akron residents, especially first-time buyers, build equity and remain in their neighborhoods. It supports long-term affordability and generational wealth-building.</p>	Alpha Phi Alpha Homes (Residences at Good Park TIF) OHFA Downpayment Assistance City of Akron Ohio Department of Development Welcome Home Program, Housing Assistance Grant Program, Building Demolition and Site Revitalization Program
T-26	Financial advisory and homeowner preparation programs	Provides one-on-one financial counseling and homebuyer readiness programs for renters and aspiring owners. These services help households repair credit, build savings, and make informed decisions about buying and keeping a home.		Akron United Way Financial Empowerment Center EANDC Homeownership Center Habitat for Humanity
T-27	Community Land Trusts that lower land prices for affordable homeownership	Creates Community Land Trusts that keep land in community or non-profit ownership while allowing families to buy homes on that land. This structure keeps homes permanently affordable and helps residents build wealth without fueling displacement.		Not currently established
T-28	Advocacy for new resources for affordable homeownership	Builds coalitions to advocate for new grants, tax credits, and other resources that support affordable homeownership. The goal is to expand pathways to owning a home for Black residents and others historically shut out of the market.		CHN Housing Partners
T-29	Public art program that commemorates the history of the Innerbelt	Funds public art, memorials, and cultural projects that tell the story of the Innerbelt and the neighborhoods it disrupted. These artworks honor the history of Akron's Black community and support local artists while making public spaces more distinctive and welcoming.	<p><b>13</b></p> <p><b>Memorialize the harm done by Urban Renewal</b></p> <p><b>14</b></p> <p><b>Create opportunities to celebrate Akron's contemporary identity and cultural creativity</b></p>	Organizations to support this work should be identified by the community with support from the Innerbelt Advisory Group, but could include: Black Artist Guild ArtsNOW Akron Urban League Summit County Historical Society Philanthropy
T-30	Fresh food access programs	Brings fresh, healthy food closer to Innerbelt area residents with mobile markets and grocery buses. Improved food access supports better health and reduces the need to travel far for basic groceries.		<p><b>17</b></p> <p><b>Support programs and services that address basic community needs</b></p>

## TOOL HIGHLIGHT

T-3

## Affordable Neighborhood Retail Space for Small Businesses

### What the Tool Does

Creates affordable spaces – storefronts, pop-up, or temporary spaces – where small businesses can test ideas and reach customers without taking on high rent. This lowers the barriers for local and Black-owned businesses to have a visible presence in the neighborhood.

### How the Tool Can Be Designed and Deployed

Creating affordable neighborhood retail spaces requires available buildings and sites, funding, developer/operator capacity, and regulatory support.

### Available Buildings and Sites

Several vacant sites and buildings have been identified as potential candidates for creating affordable neighborhood retail spaces in the Innerbelt area along Exchange St. and Vernon Odom Blvd. Using these sites to create retail spaces aligns with the vision of revitalizing historical neighborhood commercial corridors (see “Invest in the Neighborhoods”, page 28).

### Developer / Operator Capacity

A critical element of this tool is to identify organizations with the demonstrated capacity to acquire, construct, own, and manage retail spaces. In Akron, EANDC, the Well CDC, and Northside Marketplace are examples of community-oriented groups and private developers with such experience. (Their relevant project experience includes Middlebury Commons, Akron Food Works, Middlebury Storefronts,

and Northside Market Place.) The City and other support organizations might partner with these organizations and/or learn from these models to advance this tool in the Vernon Odom corridor.

### Funding

Funding is another critical element of this tool. Potential funding sources for neighborhood retail spaces include refinancing, temporary lease subsidy programs, traditional bank financing and **New Market Tax Credits** administered by DFA (for eligible primarily commercial projects in qualified census tracts). The City may partner with previously mentioned organizations with experience in and a track record of obtaining these resources.

In addition, the City can explore additional mechanisms of funding support for such projects:

- Tax abatement for commercial projects along key commercial corridors (similar to the successful residential tax abatement program).
- Approaching the Ohio Department of Development about a small business commercial incentive that mimics their residential Welcome Home programs.
- Deploy TIF subsidies (see page 109).
- Explore a Community Investment Trust model (see page 115).
- Analyze current lease structures for business friendly adjustments

### Regulatory Support

Finally, the City can provide additional support by creating more permissive zoning for neighborhood retail establishments, including zoning for temporary and pop-up retail.

## TOOL HIGHLIGHT

T-17

## Grants, Loans and Tax Incentives for Renovation of Existing Affordable Housing

### What the Tool Does

Provides grants, loans, and tax incentives to repair and update existing affordable housing, keeping older owner-occupied and rental homes safe, livable, and affordable for current residents and preventing their displacement.

### How the Tool Can Be Designed and Deployed

#### Funding Sources

A number of funding sources and programs already exist to support the rehabilitation of existing housing for low-to moderate-income residents. These include:

**Akron’s CDBG and HOME funding:** CDBG funds the city-wide Minor Home Repair Program, a partnership between the City and Rebuilding Together Northeast Ohio to deliver health- and safety-related critical repairs.

**Summit County Affordable Housing Trust Fund (via DFA/WRCF)** provides low-cost loans to nonprofits, CDCs, and mission-driven owners to acquire and rehabilitate small buildings or scattered-site units.

**Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF):** OHTF supports home repair and accessibility modifications for low-income homeowners. A wide range of organizations, including nonprofits and private developers, can apply for this competitively allocated funding.

**Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) sources:** local banks, working through FHLB’s Community Investment Program (CIP), Zero Interest Fund (ZIF), and Affordable

Housing Program (AHP), can offer below-market rehab loans and project grants for both homeowners and affordable housing operators.

**Funding programs for lead hazard abatement and home weatherization assistance** can cover specialized repairs, helping to stretch other dollars further.

The future **Community Reinvestment Fund**, funded through sources like City land sales in the Innerbelt, is another potential future source.

### Coordination & Outreach

While these resources exist, many of them are only accessible to non-profits, CDCs, and mission-driven developers; the typical West Akron resident may have difficulty in navigating and accessing these resources directly. The City can play an important role in coordination and outreach, including:

**Creating a unified home repair program** focused on the Innerbelt area, where low-to moderate-income residents can apply once through a single front door and be matched to the right mix of grants and loans. Undertake resident outreach to broaden awareness of this program and existing resources like the Homestead Exemption and Owner Occupancy Credit.

**Geographically target resource allocation (e.g. HOME and CDBG funding)** with an Innerbelt-area set-aside.

**Tie housing repair assistance to anti-displacement commitments** such as owner-occupancy and long-term rental affordability.

**Partner with non-profits and CDCs to structure larger/scattered site housing rehabilitation initiatives** that can access larger sources of funding (e.g. a OHTF “special projects” grant).

## TOOL HIGHLIGHT

T-29

## Public Art Program Commemorating the History of the Innerbelt

### What the Tool Does

Funds public art, memorials, and cultural projects that celebrate the culture and character of the community and tell the story of the Innerbelt and the neighborhoods it disrupted. These artworks honor the history of Akron's Black community and support local artists while making public spaces more distinctive and welcoming.

### How the Tool Can Be Designed and Deployed

#### Potential Public Art Sites

A number of key locations in the Innerbelt area are good candidate sites for commemorative public art, including the APS site (former Howard St.), the temporary planting in the northern Innerbelt right-of-way, and along Vernon Odom Blvd. (former Wooster Ave.), among other locations.

#### Potential Funding

A mix of City and philanthropic funding can support a public art program. City funding can come from a "percent-for-art" set aside from Innerbelt area projects or from the future Community Reinvestment Fund, and local foundations, institutions, and corporate partners can be encouraged to match City contributions. As funding from implementation frameworks like the Innerbelt TIF will take many years to come to fruition, a modest, steady dedicated budget could be supported by the City and philanthropic support.

Several major national philanthropic organizations are funding artistic memorialization that address histories

of displacement, urban renewal, and racial injustice. The Innerbelt is a strong contender for such funding. Key funding sources for this type of work include the **Monuments Project (Mellon Foundation)** and the **Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Challenge**.

A program might be structured to support both permanent public art and memorials and temporary, rotating works, selected through a competitive process. Priorities should be given to projects that elevate the Black experience, are developed in collaboration with Innerbelt area residents and/or displaced families, and make clear connections between historical harm and future repair.

The City should include the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group in the structure of such a program, and include expertise from the local arts community. Local arts leaders can be assembled as a working group or advisory body with the Innerbelt Community Advisory Group to advise on concepts, project evaluation, and selection.

#### CASE STUDY



#### Greenwood Arts Project

TULSA, OK

A city-led public art initiative, supported by a \$1M Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge grant and other partners, that commissioned dozens of artworks to honor Greenwood/"Black Wall Street," reckon with the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, and support community healing.

## TOOL HIGHLIGHT

T-30

## Fresh Food Access Program

### What the Tool Does

Brings fresh, healthy food closer to Innerbelt area residents with mobile markets and grocery buses. Improved food access supports better health and reduces the need to travel far for basic groceries.

Throughout the Master Plan process, residents have indicated a clear need for a grocery store in Sherbondy Hill. This Program aims to address this gap in the short term, until future neighborhood revitalization brings in enough residents to support a full-service grocery store.

### How the Tool Can Be Designed and Deployed

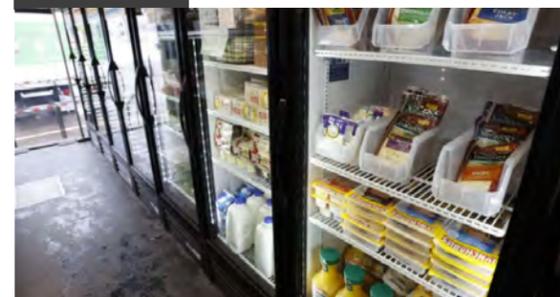
A number of local initiatives already exist to address access to groceries. The City can partner with these initiatives, and contribute resources to expand their coverage in the Innerbelt area.

**Summit Fresh Mobile Market** is a mobile grocery store in a converted bus. Ensure that it will visit Sherbondy Hill on a regular basis.

**Work with Let's Grow Akron** to provide a produce stand at their existing garden at Fern St. and Vernon Odom Blvd.

**Partner with Metro RTA** to provide a more frequent food circulator bus to take Sherbondy Hill residents to Aldi and Summit Lake Farmer's Market. The existing "**Grocery Bus**" already makes stops in a number of Innerbelt area locations, but can potentially increase in frequency and public awareness.

#### LOCAL PRECEDENT



#### Summit Fresh Mobile Market

AKRON, OH

A mobile grocery store in a converted bus

**APPENDIX C**

**Planning  
Glossary**

# Planning Glossary

## Acronyms

### AMHA

#### Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority

Public agency that owns and manages affordable housing in Akron and Summit County.

### BRT

#### Bus Rapid Transit

A type of high-quality bus service that uses features like dedicated lanes and priority at traffic signals to provide faster, more reliable transit.

### CDBG

#### Community Development Block Grant

A federal HUD program that gives flexible funding to cities like Akron to support housing, infrastructure, and community development in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.

### CDC

#### Community Development Corporation

A non-profit, community-based organization that develops housing, commercial space, and services to support neighborhood revitalization. Examples in Akron include EANDC.

### CDFI

#### Community Development Financial Institution

A specialized lender, such as a nonprofit loan fund or community-focused bank, that finances affordable housing, small businesses, and other community projects that traditional banks often overlook.

### CIT

#### Community Investment Trust

A model that enables local residents to collectively invest in and earn returns from community-owned real estate, supporting inclusive wealth-building and long-term neighborhood stability.

### CLT

#### Community Land Trust

A nonprofit organization that owns land permanently on behalf of the community and sells or rents homes on that land at affordable prices over the long term.

### DFA

#### Development Finance Authority of Summit County

A local public finance agency that helps structure and deliver financing tools—like bonds or tax credit deals—for development projects in Akron and Summit County.

### WRCF

#### Western Reserve Community Fund

A community development financial institution affiliated with the Development Finance Authority that provides flexible loans and investments for affordable housing and community projects.

### FHWA

#### Federal Highway Administration

The federal agency that oversees the Interstate system and provides funding and guidance for highway planning, construction, maintenance, and removal.

### HUD

#### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The federal agency that oversees housing policy and programs including CDBG, HOME, and public housing.

### IIJA

#### Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

A major federal infrastructure law that includes funding to repair roads and bridges, expand transit, and support programs like Reconnecting Communities, which funded the Innerbelt Master Plan.

### IJS

#### Interstate/Interchange Justification Study

A detailed traffic and engineering study required by FHWA and state DOTs to justify changes to interstate interchanges, including closures or removals.

### LIHTC

#### Low-Income Housing Tax Credit

A federal tax credit that helps finance affordable rental housing by giving investors a tax break in exchange for keeping rents affordable for lower-income households.

**MBAC****Minority Business Assistance Center (Akron Urban League)**

Provides training, counseling, and assistance to minority-owned businesses.

**MBDD****Minority Business Development Division (Ohio Dept. of Development)**

A division of the State of Ohio that supports minority-owned businesses with technical assistance, certification, and access to financing.

**NEIC****NorthEast Investment Cooperative**

A member-owned cooperative in Minneapolis that buys and improves commercial property, used in the plan as a precedent for community investment trusts.

**NMTC****New Markets Tax Credits**

A federal tax credit that encourages private investment in projects located in low-income communities, such as commercial or mixed-use developments.

**ODOT****Ohio Department of Transportation**

The state agency that owns, operates, and maintains highways like SR 59 (the Innerbelt) and must approve any decommissioning or major changes.

**OHFA****Ohio Housing Finance Agency**

The state agency that administers programs like LIHTC and the Ohio Housing Trust Fund to support affordable housing.

**QAP****Qualified Allocation Plan**

A state-level policy document that sets the rules and priorities for how LIHTC credits are awarded to affordable housing developments.

**ROW****Right-of-Way**

Land that is reserved for public infrastructure like roads, sidewalks, utilities, or trails; in this plan it often refers to land under the Innerbelt.

**SMBA****Summit Medina Business Association**

A federally supported local program that provides free or low-cost training, advising, and support to small businesses and entrepreneurs.

**TIF****Tax Increment Financing**

A local financing tool that uses the increase in property tax revenue from new development in a defined area to pay for infrastructure, affordable housing, and other public benefits.

**TMUD****Transformational Mixed-Use Development Program (Ohio)**

A state program that provides tax credits to large, mixed-use projects that are expected to significantly transform their surrounding area.

**Symbols****Cost Estimation**

§§§§ \$50,000 - \$500,000

§§§§§ \$500,001 - \$2,000,000

§§§§§§ \$2,000,001 - \$10,000,000

§§§§§§§ \$10,000,000+

**Timeline**

🕒🕒 0 - 5 years

🕒🕒🕒 5 - 15 years

🕒🕒🕒🕒 15 - 30+ years

**Planning Concepts****Active transportation**

Getting around using non-car modes like walking, biking, or rolling (wheelchairs, scooters) for everyday trips.

**Anti-displacement tools**

Policies and programs designed to help current residents and businesses stay in their neighborhoods as investment and property values rise.

**Brownfield**

A property where redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived contamination from past industrial or commercial uses.

**Complete Streets**

An approach to street design that makes roads safe and comfortable for people walking, biking, taking transit, using mobility devices, and driving.

**Decommissioning (a highway)**

Formally closing a highway or highway segment and removing or repurposing it so the land can be used for other community-serving purposes.

**Displacement (of residents or**

**businesses)**

When rising housing costs, property taxes, or changes in the neighborhood force people or businesses to move from where they live or operate.

**Form-based code**

A type of zoning code that focuses on the size, shape, and placement of buildings and streetscapes rather than just separating land uses, to create walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.

**Ground lease**

A long-term lease in which a landowner (often a public or nonprofit entity) rents land to a developer or occupant, allowing community control of the land while buildings on it may be privately owned.

**Highest and Best Use (HABU)**

A real estate concept describing the most profitable or intense use of a property under market conditions, which can be contrasted with “best use” from a community perspective.

**Homestead exemption**

A property tax reduction that lowers taxes for eligible homeowners, often seniors or low-income households, on their primary residence.

**Infill development / infill housing**

New buildings constructed on vacant or underused lots within an existing neighborhood, rather than on previously undeveloped land at the edge of the city.

**Mixed-income housing**

A development or neighborhood that includes homes affordable to people at different income levels, often combining subsidized and market-rate units.

**Place-based projects**

Specific physical improvements, such as new housing, park upgrades, or safer streets, that change the built environment in a particular location. In this Master Plan, they are paired with Social Impact Tools.

**Public realm**

All the outdoor spaces the public can access and share, including streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas, and trails.

**Reconnecting Communities (Program)**

A federal grant program under the IIJA that funds planning and construction projects to remove or mitigate transportation barriers like highways that divide communities.

**Reconnecting Our Community – Phase 1**

The earlier, community-led planning effort in Akron that documented the harms of the Innerbelt and set the foundation for the current Master Plan’s focus on repair.

**Right of return**

A commitment or policy that prioritizes former residents (or their descendants) who were displaced by past projects to move back into new housing built in the area.

**Social impact tools**

Non-physical tools, like policies, programs, funding, and governance structures, designed to deliver social and economic benefits such as housing stability, small business support, or community services.

**Tax abatement (property tax abatement)**

A temporary reduction or elimination of property taxes for certain properties, often used to encourage new investment or preserve affordability.

**Tax credit**

A tax incentive that reduces the amount of taxes owed, often used to attract private investment into priorities like affordable housing, historic preservation, or economic development in specific areas. Examples include historic tax credits, which finance the

rehabilitation of historic buildings in exchange for preserving their key features.

**Temporary activation (of land)**

Short-term uses—such as community events, art, or pop-up parks – that bring life and visibility to a site while longer-term plans are still being developed.

**Urban Renewal**

A mid-70th-century federal and local program that cleared older urban neighborhoods, often Black and low-income communities, for highways and large-scale redevelopment.

**Value capture**

A set of tools that allow the public sector to capture some of the increased land value created by public investments and channel it back into community benefits.

# Acknowledgments

## Community Partners

ACCESS Inc.	Arlington Church of God	FirstEnergy	PNC Bank
Akron Bicentennial	ArtsNow	Freedom BLOC	Premier Bank
Akron Black Artist Guild	Balch Street Community Center	GAR Foundation	Progress Through Preservation
Akron Children's	Bayard Rustin LGBTQ+ Resource Center	Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce	Progressive Alliance CDC
Akron City Council	The Black Chamber of Commerce of Summit County	Guys & Gals Inc	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Akron Community Foundation	Bounce Innovation Hub	Habitat for Humanity of Summit County	Rubber City Jazz & Blues Festival
Akron Cooperative Farm	City of Akron Department of Economic Development	Habitat for Humanity of Summit County - Neighborhood Network	Saint Vincent De Paul Parish & Elementary
Akron Energy Systems	City of Akron Department of Planning & Urban Development	Harmony House	Saint Vincent St Mary High School
Akron History Center	City of Akron Engineering Bureau	The House of the Lord	Signet Real Estate Group
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority (AMHA)	City of Akron Public Art Commission	Huntington Bank	Spire Development
Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS)	City of Akron Parks Department	Industrial Realty Group (IRG)	Stark State College
Akron NAACP	Cleveland Clinic Akron General Hospital	JobsOhio	Stewart & Calhoun Funeral Home
Akron Public Schools - Crouce CLC	ConxusNEO	Key Bank	Summa Health
Akron Public Schools - Helen Arnold CLC	Community Action Akron Summit	Knight Foundation	Summit Artspace
Akron Public Schools - I Promise School	County of Summit	Lebron James Family Foundation	Summit County Land Bank
Akron Public Schools - Miller South School for the Visual and Performing Arts	County of Summit Department of Community & Economic Development	The Light Church	Summit Education Initiative
Akron Rites of Passage Institute	Cuyahoga Valley National Park	Mayor's Youth Leadership Council	Summit Medina Business Association
Akron SCORE	Development Finance Authority of Summit County (DFA)	METRO RTA	Summit Metro Parks
Akron Summit Medina Business Association (SMBA)	Downtown Akron Development Corporation	Mount Zion Baptist Church	T.M. Rybak
Akron Summit Community Action	Downtown Akron Partnership	NAI Pleasant Valley	Team NEO
Akron Urban League	East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation (EANDC)	North Hill CDC	Testa Companies
Akron Urban League - Minority Business Assistance Center (MBAC)	Economic & Community Development Center (ECDI)	Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition	Tober Development Company
Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank	Elevate Greater Akron Spark Akron Working Group	Ohio Department of Development	United Way of Summit & Medina
Akron-Summit County Public Library	Everett Group	Ohio Department of Transportation	The University of Akron
Akron-Summit County Public Library - Vernon Odom Branch	Fifth Third Bank	Ohio Housing Finance Agency	The Well CDC
Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau		Open M Employment Services	Welty Building Company
Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc.		Open Tone Music	Wesley Temple AME Zion Church
		Osborne Capital Group	West Hill Neighborhood Organization

# Acknowledgments



## City of Akron

**Shamas Malik, Mayor**  
**Kyle Julien, Director of Planning**

**Suzie Graham Moore, Director of Economic Development**

**Esther Thomas, Director of the Office of Opportunity and Engagement**

**City of Akron Staff**

**Innerbelt Advisory Group**

**Citizens of Akron, Ohio**

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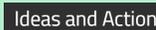
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