

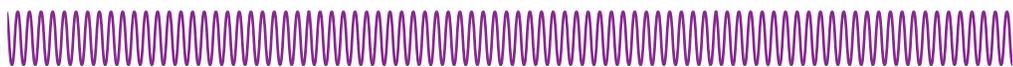
EVIDENCE OF LIFE



Community Revitalization Visioning
Arkansas City, KS



June 7, 2022



COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION VISIONING

Arkansas City, KS

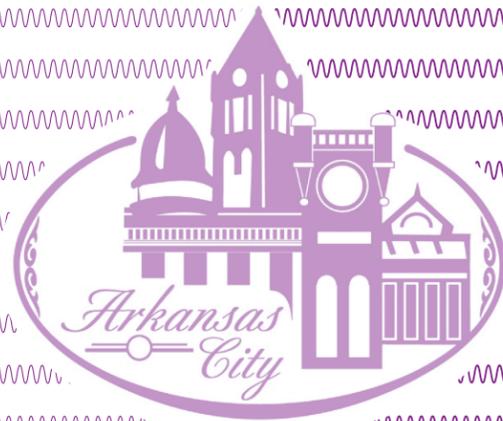
INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 2022, faculty and students from South Dakota State University’s School of Design collaborated with Kansas State University Technical Assistance to Brownfields (TAB) and leaders from Arkansas City, Kansas to develop a long-range planning concept for brownfield sites in the downtown core. SDSU Students majoring in graphic design, interior design, landscape architecture and architecture, led by Dr. Pat Crawford, Dr. Elizabeth Tofte, Seojoo Han, and Ray Rayburn, developed concepts for improving downtown based on seven priorities identified by stakeholders at the community input meeting on February 5, 2022.

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

As world population demographics shift, fossil fuel energy resources become scarcer, human activities continue to threaten our environment and economies grow ever more inextricably linked, communities need to become more resilient, sustainable and capable of providing a high quality of life to their inhabitants. A resilient, vibrant community has an authentic expression of culture and art, an emphasis on functionality, and supports and builds on local assets where individuals can work, live, learn, and play. In examining thriving cities across the globe, some shared characteristics rise to the top:

- connectivity (access to transportation and movement systems, inclusive public spaces and third places for gathering, digital and virtual connections)
- opportunity (access to diversity of jobs, education, recreation opportunities)
- density (mixed use and access to diverse housing, health care, services, and commerce in the community core)
- culture & arts (reflection of the history and culture of the community in the built environment)
- sustainability (integration of sustainable, green, and carbon neutral practices and habits)



SITE HISTORY AND SURROUNDING AMENITIES

Across the Midwest, cultural activities bring meaning, tourism, and economic vitality back to historic downtowns (Gray, 2005). Community redevelopment projects are being transformed using local arts and culture. Creation of welcoming third places is a key component to transforming underperforming urban neighborhoods. What is a third place? The term third place refers to a place where people meet, exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships. It is not home often referred to as the ‘first’ place and not work referred to as the ‘second’ place. Rather, it is a relaxed public place where you feel welcome to spend time. Incorporating third places into community redevelopment plans, assures a healthier living, working, and leisure environment for everyone.



Downtown Arkansas City in the 1960s, looking south

Arkansas City was founded in 1870 at the confluence of the Arkansas River and Walnut River by European-American settlers. Population grew from 214 in 1870 to 1,799 by 1880. The city grew with the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway, plus construction of flour and sawmills and the meat packing industry. Arkansas City population expanded starting in 1891, when thousands of people moved into the area in anticipation of the Cherokee Strip Land Run. Oil was discovered between 1920 and 1930 and refineries were built. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arkansas City population in 2020 was 11,974.

LOCAL ATTRACTIONS



Cowley County Waterfall



Cherokee Strip Land Run Museum

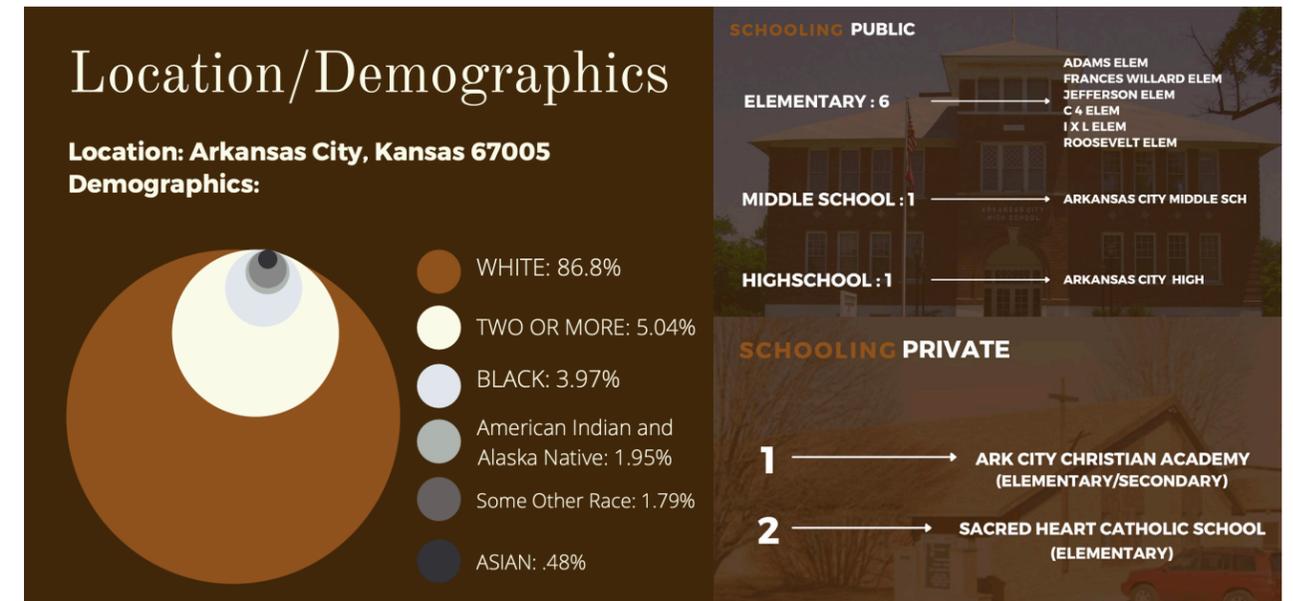


Burford Theatre



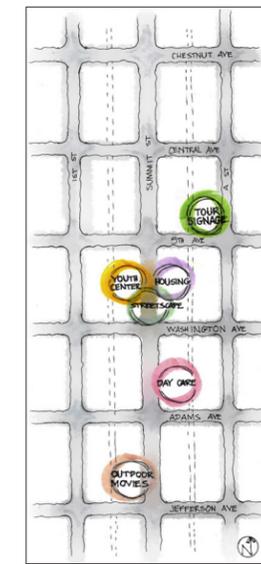
Cowley State Fishing Lake

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SCHOOLING



THE PROJECT SITE

The project site is located in downtown Arkansas City, Kansas. Survey of buildings and streetscape followed the boundary of the historic district designation.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

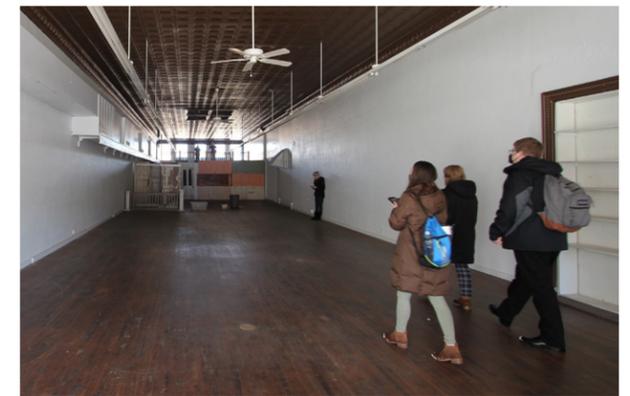
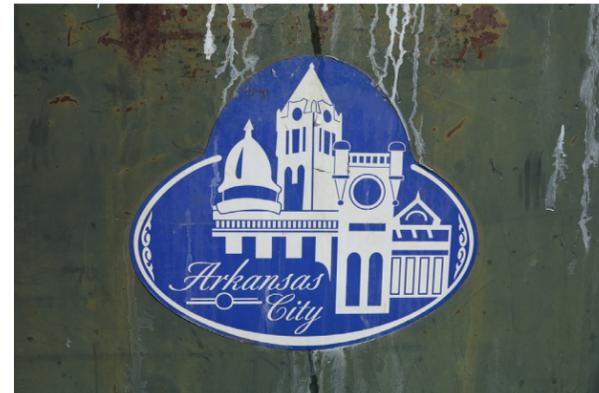
MEETING COMMUNITY LEADERS

The TAB partners team field trip started with a Chamber of Commerce Coffee hour to meet with local business leaders. The team also joined City leaders in an informal lunch and break out discussions with the SDSU students. This meeting was held February 4, 2022.



SITE VISIT

Local businesses and property owners generously provided opportunities for the SDSU students to tour the inside of buildings in the downtown core. Site reconnaissance was conducted February 4 and 5, 2022.



COMMUNITY MEETING INPUT PROCESS

The public meeting followed a set format (see below) that has been found to be successful in assisting community members envision revitalization efforts in their downtown. Stakeholders were seated at round tables in the Burford Theatre. Each table was hosted by a SDSU student who facilitated the roundtable discussion.

- Attendees work in round table groups of maximum 8 people. Each group will be tasked with brainstorming ideas for redevelopment/revitalization for downtown Arkansas.
- Questions the groups may discuss to come to a consensus re priorities for revitalization: what is missing in downtown? What would make downtown more attractive to residents as well as tourists? How should downtown look like in the near future?
- Groups will prioritize their ideas and list their top 5 agreed upon priorities on a large flip chart paper and tack it onto a designated wall in the meeting room when done.
- Individual groups report out and present their priorities to the main group.
- After all groups have reported out, all attendees will receive 5 votes in the form of sticky dots and will vote for the 5 ideas they like best among all those presented by sticking their dots behind the idea/ideas they like best. They may vote for 5 different ideas or put all their sticky dots behind just 1 idea or distribute differently – they use their 5 votes as they see fit.



TOP PRIORITIES SORTED INTO LIKE CATEGORIES

February 8th, 2022

PLEASE JOIN US!
We want your ideas to revitalize Downtown Arkansas City



Saturday, February 5, 2022
11 am to about 12:30 pm
Burford Theater
118 S Summit Street

Please Join a Community Input Session led by Kansas State University to provide input for the revitalization of Downtown Arkansas City.

TAB Kansas State University
Technical Assistance to Brownfields Program

Overview
11:00 am

Working in small groups, provide input and ideas to improve Downtown Arkansas City

Close-out
Noon – 12:30 pm

Refreshments provided

Contact:
Josh White
City of Arkansas City
jwhite@arkansascityks.gov
620-441-4420

SESSION HELD AT:
Burford Theater
118 S Summit Street
Arkansas City

After the community input meeting, all recorded comments were sorted by frequency of word mention and by topic. SDSU team of students and faculty studied the top priorities and then sorted them into like categories. Seven categories emerged: policies, entertainment, aesthetics, food, branding, living and transportation/ circulation.

Policies- 40 votes

- Open after 5:00 pm – 8 votes
- Identify Resources – Tax Credits, Grants, Code Enforcement Flex – 13 votes
- Business for Humanity seed \$ – 6 votes
- Taxes & policies are prohibitive to growth in the downtown core – 7 votes
- Showcase local talent – 4 votes
- Business more control over storefronts – 0 vote
- Community Unity/ Merchants City Chamber – 3 votes
- Focus on experiential + services – 2 votes
- Offer what customer needs – Hours, Service, Consistency – 1 vote
- Bringing people downtown – business development & education – 0 vote
- City focus on the downtown core for development - not north of the town – 2 votes

Entertainment- 34 votes

- Social Setting (bookstore) – 2 votes
- Fifth Ave Popup /Summit carousel – 4 votes
- Outdoor Spaces- seating, planters/decor – 5 votes
- Youth Commercial Entertainment – 4 votes
- Create Destination Entertainment – 6 votes
- Space to socialize to bring college students + community in the evening – 6 votes
- Areas for meeting/gathering for college/business/groups – 1 vote
- Entertainment venues/areas – Artwork – 1 vote
- Retail (shoe store) – 5 votes
- Outdoor Commons – 2 votes
- Art Gallery Space – 2 votes

Aesthetics- 25 votes

- Face lift old building while keeping History w/ Murals/art – generation has an extra return space – 13 votes (signage)
- Incentive to keep buildings clean up + kept up – 6 votes
- Insta Murals on every block to create foot traffic – 5 votes windows + walls
- Maintain/ Upkeep Buildings – Visual/Functionality – 1 vote
- Progressive Utility infrastructure – 0 vote

Food- 20 votes

- Social Setting (coffee shop, bar, ice cream, juice, froyo) – 11 votes
- Small food store (affordable) – 7 votes
- Retail (sit down restaurant) – 5 votes
- Entertainment venues/areas – Restaurants/coffee Shops – 1 vote

Branding- 19 votes

- Theme- cohesive – rivers, land rush, Etzanoa – 6 votes
- Branding (Theme) of Downtown – 7 votes
- Capitalize on History – 5 votes
- History appreciation awareness Education – 1 vote

Living- 16 votes

- Incorporate Housing – 8 votes
- Residential Opp / Live/Work/Play – 4 votes
- Live Downtown – Residence/ Restaurants/ Entertainment/ shopping – 2 votes
- Downtown Living – 1 vote
- Better housing options (variety) – 1 vote

Transportation/Circulation- 5 votes

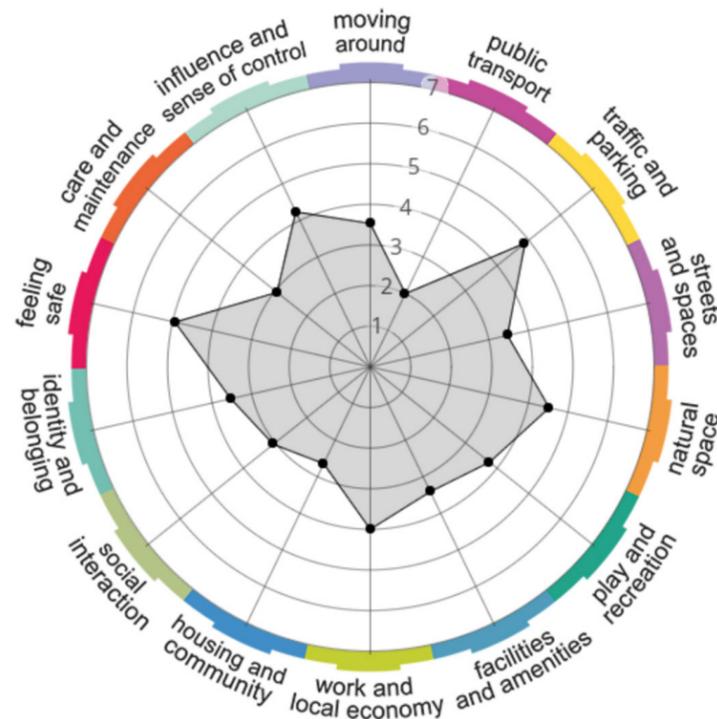
- Bike Lanes – 5 votes
- Create Median- 2 lane Rd – 0 vote
- Public Transportation (student shuttle) – 0 vote

COMMUNITY INPUT – WORD CLOUD

Key words were identified based on frequency of stakeholders' comments gathered at the public meeting with public officials on February 4, 2022 and with the general public at the Buford Theatre on February 5, 2022. **Key words were:** Art, Humanity, Downtown Branding, Food, Bike Lane, Business, Social, Outdoor Space, History, Rivers, Entertainment, Instagram, Small Store, Youth



PLACE STANDARD SURVEY TOOL



The Place Standard is a web-based tool that identifies 14 quality of life themes that support public discussion about how people feel about a place. The tool was developed in Scotland and has been used by communities in 16 countries, including the UK, Denmark, Greece, Germany, Spain, Canada, and the US. (<https://placestandard.scot/>).

The themes are: moving around, public transport, traffic & parking, streets & spaces, natural space, play & recreation, facilities & amenities, work & local economy, housing & community, social contact, identity & belonging, feeling safe, care & maintenance, and influence & sense of control. The tool allows respondents to provide a score for each theme (1= room for a lot of improvement to 7= little need for improvement) and an opportunity to write in additional thoughts.

Seventeen people provided input using the Place Standard survey. The online responses mirrored sentiments shared in the public meeting. ‘Public transport’ and ‘housing & community’ are areas that could use improvement with ‘feeling safe,’ ‘traffic & parking’ and access to ‘natural space’ perceived as in moderate need for improvement.

DESIGN CONCEPT

EVIDENCE OF LIFE

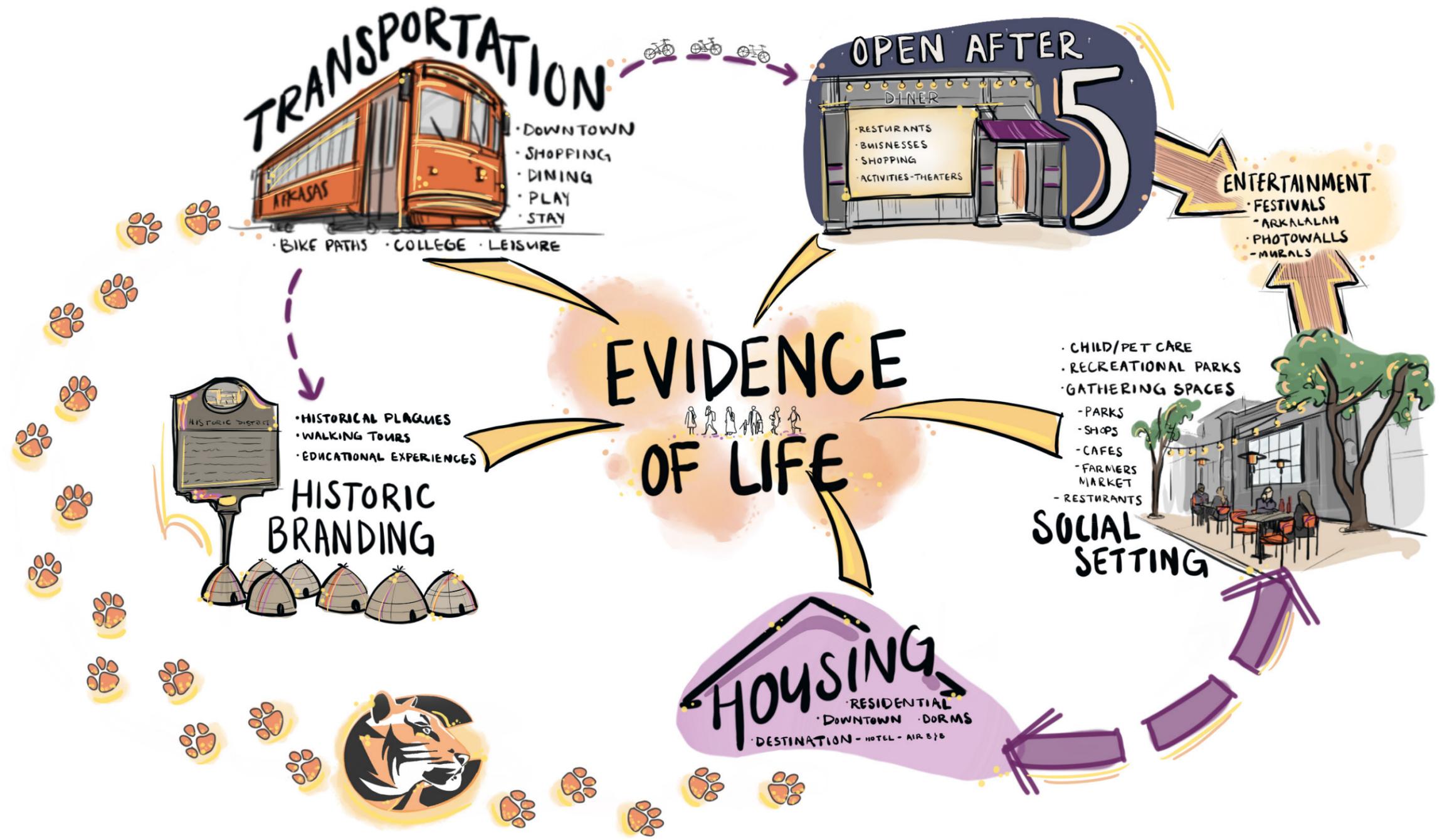
Citizens are serious about revitalizing the core of Arkansas City’s historic downtown. As discussions took place in early February 2022, three things became evident. First, the city had a thriving past. Second, the time is right to transform the historic downtown core into something special. Third, citizens have visions for a prosperous future. Visioning for the future allows stakeholder’s ideas to be shared. Recurring themes involve transportation, entertainment, and housing. Stakeholders described their desire to welcome new people into the community while holding on to a bit of their past. The phrase “evidence of life” became emblematic of the vision articulated by Arkansas City citizens. This report focuses on themes most frequently mentioned at stakeholder meetings including:

- the need for dependable public transportation, designated bike routes, and safe accessible sidewalks,
- the need for third place gathering spaces, affordable restaurants and recreational venues for children and youth,
- the need for a range of housing types and outdoor living spaces in the core of the redevelopment district,
- the need for convenient medical services. The potential to expand educational opportunities for local citizens,
- the fact that there are culturally significant buildings in the downtown core, and
- the fact that there is available space for retail, service, commercial and cottage industries.

All these, and more can help generate population density and create a unique sense of place downtown. Several themes surfaced during stakeholder meetings. They are shown encircling the EVIDENCE OF LIFE emblem.

The EVIDENCE OF LIFE emblem illustrates the interconnectedness of stakeholders’ visions for creating a new social setting in Arkansas City’s historic downtown. It illustrates important aspects of a healthy lifestyle. Branding focuses on historic places, events held at the Burford Theatre, and the Arkalalah and Tacolalah festivals. Transportation remembers the historic trolley line, the railyards, and the importance of new bike routes and walking paths.

Decisions regarding infrastructure will influence future opportunities to add after hours entertainment, dining and housing. New social settings for people of all ages may be created through public as well as private investments. Historic branding will help tell the story of Arkansas City’s past and provide cultural context for new people moving into the community. Surface graphics will celebrate and promote current events. Redevelopment efforts may provide a bright future for everyone.

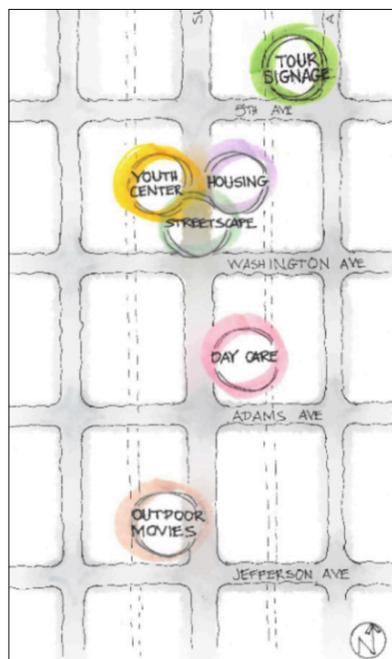


PROPOSED DESIGNS

VISIONING PROCESS FOR DESIGN WORK

Creating resilient, quality communities is as much a culture shift as it is an infrastructure improvement in the built environment. Physical space must reflect the mentality, values and desires of the populace that the community wishes to attract. The revitalization process focuses on ideas of physical transformation that celebrates the community's natural, built and human assets; enhances livability and quality of life through diversity, arts, culture, recreation, engagement, and innovation; retains and attracts a diverse population; and supports the changing demographics of cities and sustainable development. The process is a visual dialog grounded in local knowledge, supported by research and best practices. The emphasis of visual communication and the hand drawn perspective sketches focuses on creating a discussion, a dialogue, not a decision. The sketches support engagement in the discussion with an 'in-process' flexible frame of mind. Creating visual images of potential development ideas at the site scale allows for people to connect the broad redevelopment concepts with sites they know well in a real and tangible way. The ideas are just that, ideas. They can be applied in many places or sites across the community. The question is – will this type of change or development support our community's growth and values?

PROPOSED DESIGN IDEAS



The design team explored ways to unify the downtown with unique graphic signage which can be applied to on-premise signs, sidewalk treatments, and a host of other uses. An extension of this idea is proposed animation graphics either projected onto buildings, pavement or vacant windows. The graphics can be timed with the existing piped music or themed to support festivals or holidays. Vacant buildings can be activated with window treatments to enliven the downtown streetscape while buildings are awaiting their next use. Outdoor seating that takes over parking spots can activate the downtown during warm weather. Mid-block street crosswalk support slowing down traffic and provide safe access to key uses when they are across the street from each other.

The team used specific sites to demonstrate potential for a teen youth center, a variety of housing options, daycare, and outdoor dining and movies. These ideas can be implemented in a variety of locations, the images are intended to spur conversations among community members.



SURFACE GRAPHICS, SIGNAGE AND WINDOW ACTIVATION

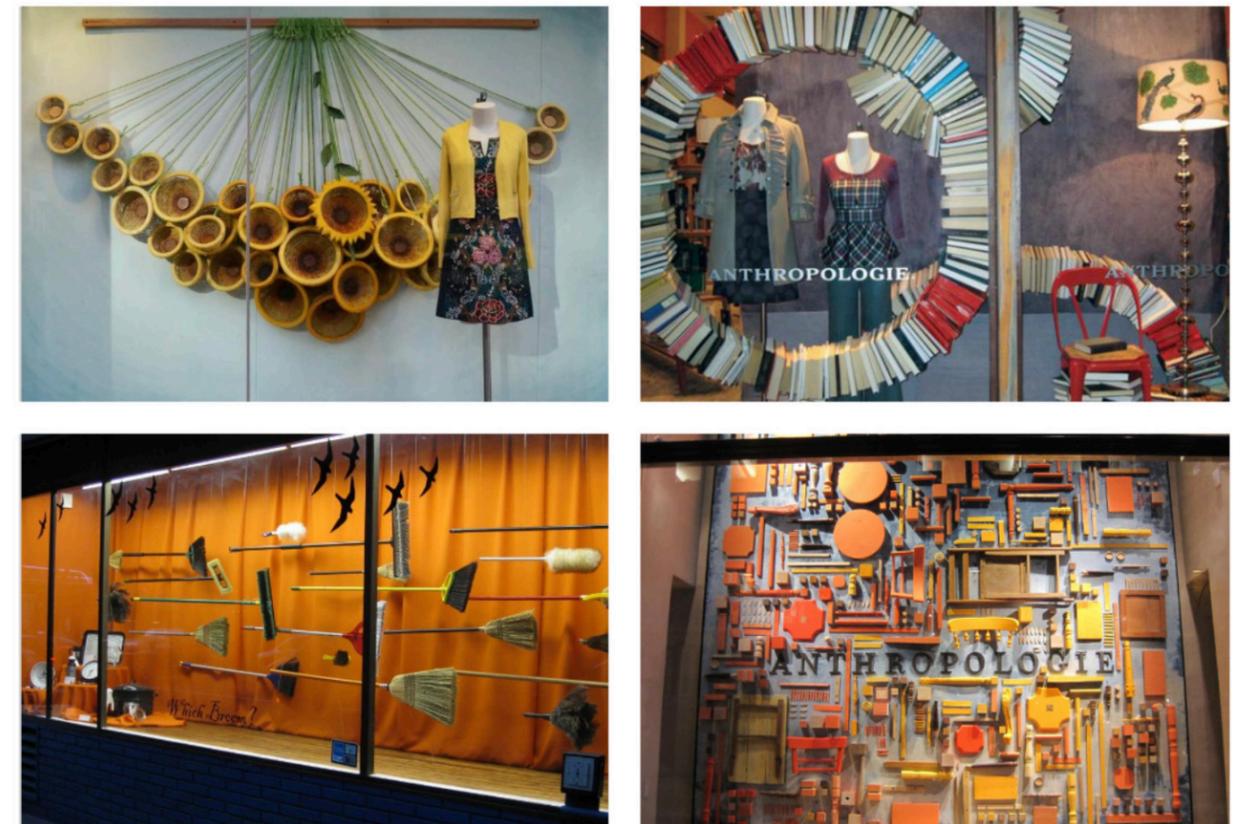
Celebrate
Communicate
Remember



Sidewalk tiles and storefront glazing (windows) are punctuated by little flashes of color which denote places of significance. These flashes of color can be generated using applied window treatments, decorative tiles, or temporary chalk drawings on pavement. Suggested tile themes are reminiscent of ornamentation from facades of the historic downtown buildings including the library, theatre, and bank. Surface graphics may further enhance Arkansas City's existing downtown walking tour pamphlet. Note the themed tile insets in the crosswalk illustrations on pages 23 and 24.

WINDOW ACTIVATION IDEAS

Marketing
Appealing
Imaginative



Examples of lively window activation are shown from the Anthropologie collection. Anthropologie is part of URBN brands, which includes Urban Outfitters, Free People, BHLDN, and Terrain. It is an American clothing retailer with approximately 200 stores across the U.S. and Canada. Window dressings are colorful, theme focused, and often communicate a constructive or positive message.

SURFACE GRAPHICS

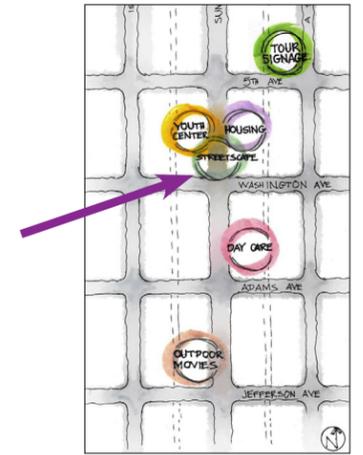
Easy
Inexpensive
Seasonal



Surface graphics play a part in accentuating “evidence of life” throughout the revitalized downtown area. Motion denoting graphics are a popular window treatment for underutilized store front windows. Activating street level windows in exciting ways can also attract tourists looking for a photo opportunity. This illustration shows an animated bison who winks and waves his tail. An example is the image painted onto a building front in the streetscape seating illustration.

STREETSCAPE OUTDOOR SEATING

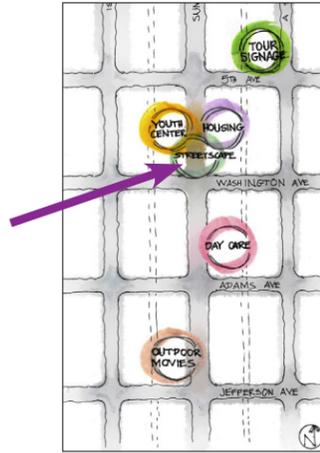
Communal
Active
Open



Mid-block street enhancements increase the livability of downtown spaces in several ways. Amenities such as street trees, bollards, and seasonal planters help people feel more comfortable and willing to spend time in the space. Amenities such as shade trees and movable seating help to increase peoples’ length of participation at events taking place in the historic downtown area. Amenities increase a city’s livability index. A high livability index score directly affects the health and viability of locals and may serve to enhance tourist business. This image illustrates how seating in front of a new coffee shop or restaurant would provide a third place for locals and tourists to gather. Reclaiming a bit of the roadway can serve as public open space or enhance a small business that might benefit from extended outdoor seating.

STREETSCAPE CROSSWALK

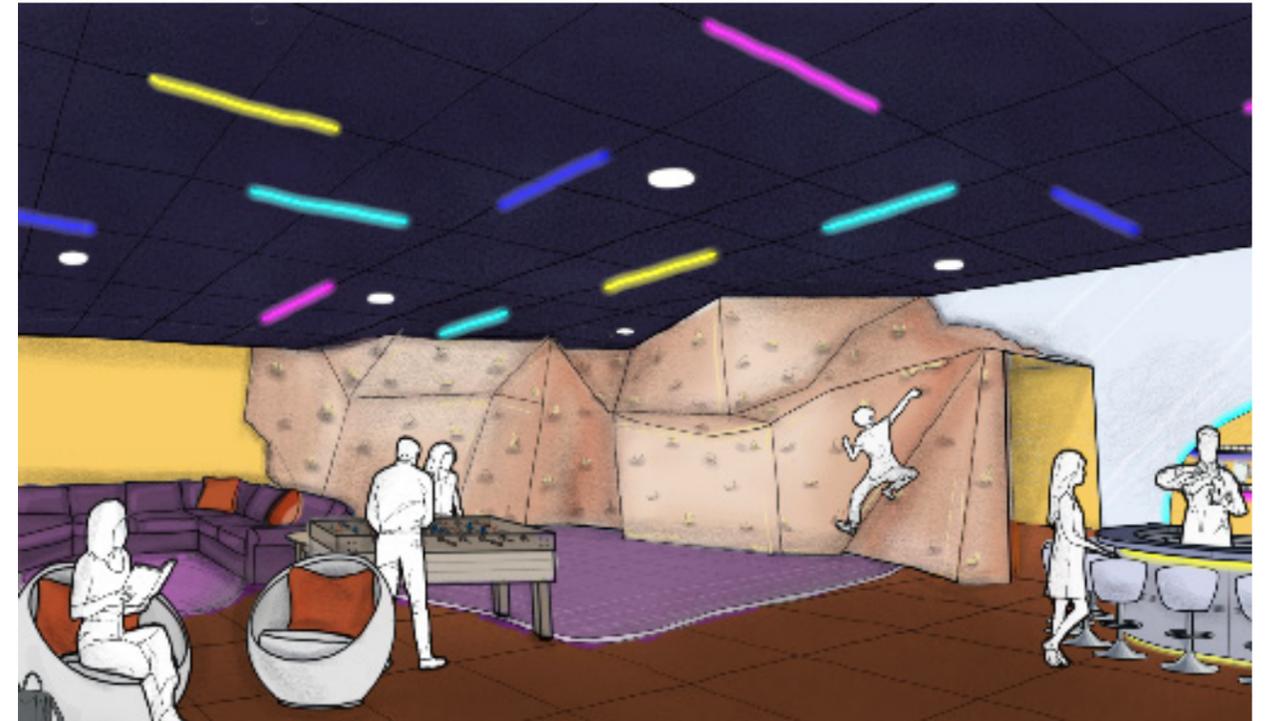
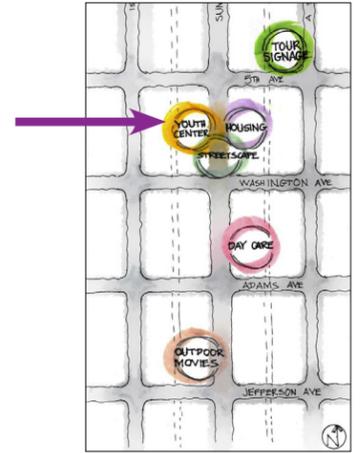
Safe
Attractive
Connected



Vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Summit Street must be addressed as part of the revitalization plans for historic downtown Arkansas City. While a total street make-over is not necessary, some traffic calming is recommended to provide on-street pedestrian nodes. Traffic calming may be accomplished through a variety of traffic management approaches. These approaches reduce vehicular speeds while not affecting overall traffic volumes. Research has shown that narrowing streets is more conducive to street calming than speed bumps. Motorists are sent the message to “slow down” and “share the road” because pedestrians are important. When a street is narrowed, the sidewalk is widened or extended into the crosswalk. Often an eye-catching mid-block crosswalk is installed. This image illustrates how painted geometric rectangles, a modification of the square tile designs (described as surface graphics), are used to denote a mid-block pedestrian crossing on Summit Street. This connects the youth center and housing options creating a safe mid-block crossing.

YOUTH CENTER INTERIOR

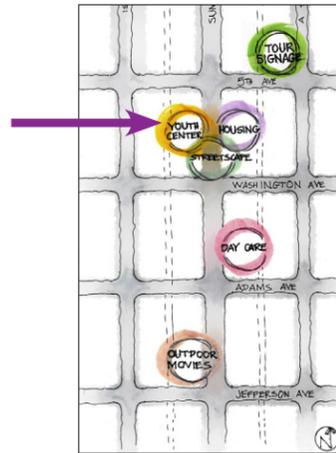
Active
Comfortable
Inviting



With a new Arkansas City youth center located in the center of downtown will provide youths with a place to gather, recreate, play games, and explore possibilities. Designed to be inviting year-round, the youth center will allow junior high, high school, and college-age people a place to hold a variety of indoor and outdoor events. This image shows a climbing wall, games, lounge space, and a snack bar located on the main floor of an existing building facing Summit Street.

YOUTH CENTER ROOF

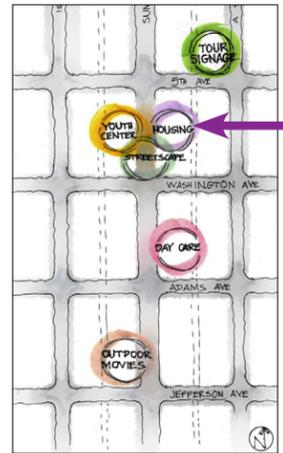
Social
Inclusive
Co-ed



A number of downtown buildings were identified as having potential to be renovated with a food court and gaming area on the main floor, a speakeasy music venue in the cellar/basement, and an exhilarating rooftop venue for watching movies. College students, who participated in the stakeholder meeting, suggested having a third space set aside for late night studying and proposed creating a venue that would support pop-up entrepreneurial businesses. This image shows a rooftop venue converted to an outdoor movie theater and space to chill.

FAMILY APARTMENT

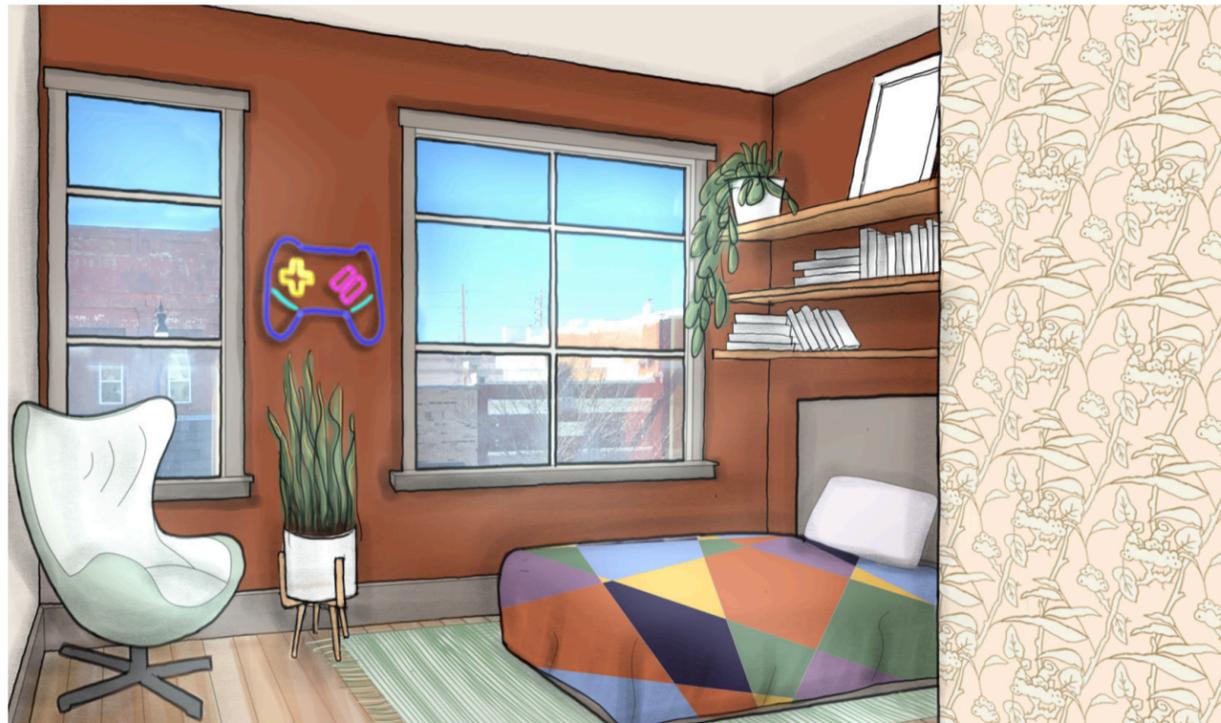
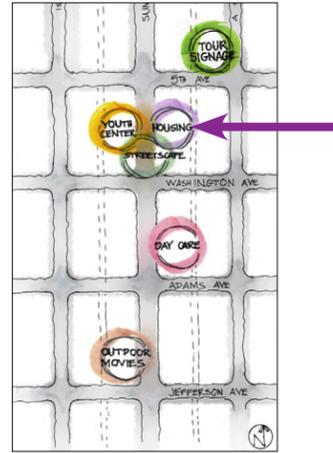
Comfortable
Affordable
Convenient



According to Forbes, small town downtowns are hot again! One of the hottest trends in rural economic development is restoration of upper-level loft-living in historic buildings. Upper floors in many of the buildings in downtown Arkansas City appear ideal for renovating into living quarters. Arkansas City's recent housing study indicated a need for a range of housing types from high-end luxury lofts to affordable family size apartments, to studio apartments for college students. This image shows a view of Summit from a second story efficiency apartment.

COLLEGE LIVING

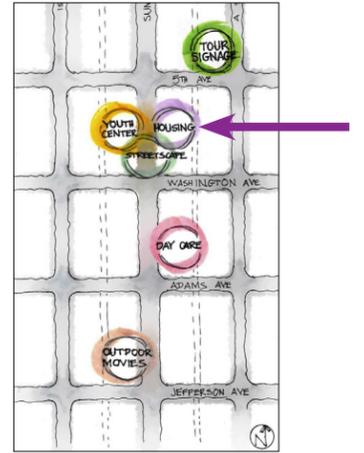
Flexible
Possible
Opportune



Arkansas City is home to Cowley College. Students from South and Central America make up a high percentage of its student body. Most foreign students do not hold driver's licenses. This limits their mobility. New housing opportunities and eating establishments would be a welcome addition for the Cowley College students. This image shows a private room with shared communal living space (not shown). Some upper floors of historic buildings have adequate space for flexible living opportunities and include balconies or space for rooftop patios.

HIGH-END LOFT

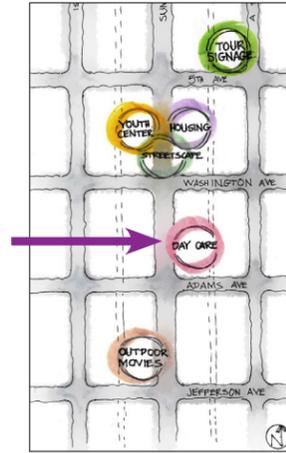
Luxurious
Spacious
Quiet



As the baby boomer population ages, there is ample opportunity for developers to capitalize on people moving to what they perceive as the “perfect” small community. Revitalizing downtown to meet the needs and expectations of this unique population will require an orchestrated plan involving adequate public transportation, dependable eating establishments, a variety of third places for socializing, and plenty of entertainment, along with an array of housing options. This image shows how a loft might be organized to capture light from east and west facing windows with a skylight in the middle of the living space.

DAYCARE (STREET FRONT)

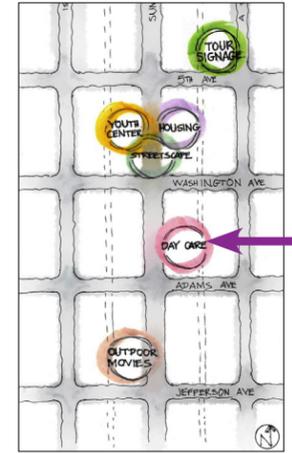
Welcoming
Reliable
Educational



Opening a daycare in the downtown area will bring families to the area. It will extend the hours of needed services benefitting coffee shops and family dining establishments. This illustration shows a daycare facility located in a building that has ample space for an outdoor play area in the back of the building near the alley.

DAYCARE (BACK EXTERIOR)

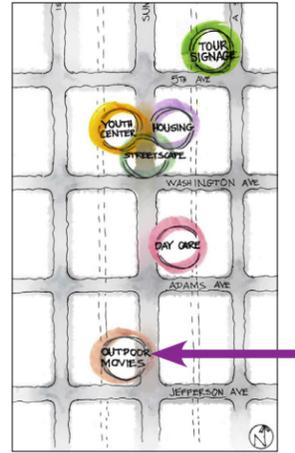
Growth
Engaging
Playful



Children bring life to the city. This image shows housing a daycare on the main floor of a building with ample space for an outdoor play area in the back of the building near the alley. Children enrolled in this daycare will benefit from walks about town and trips to the public library.

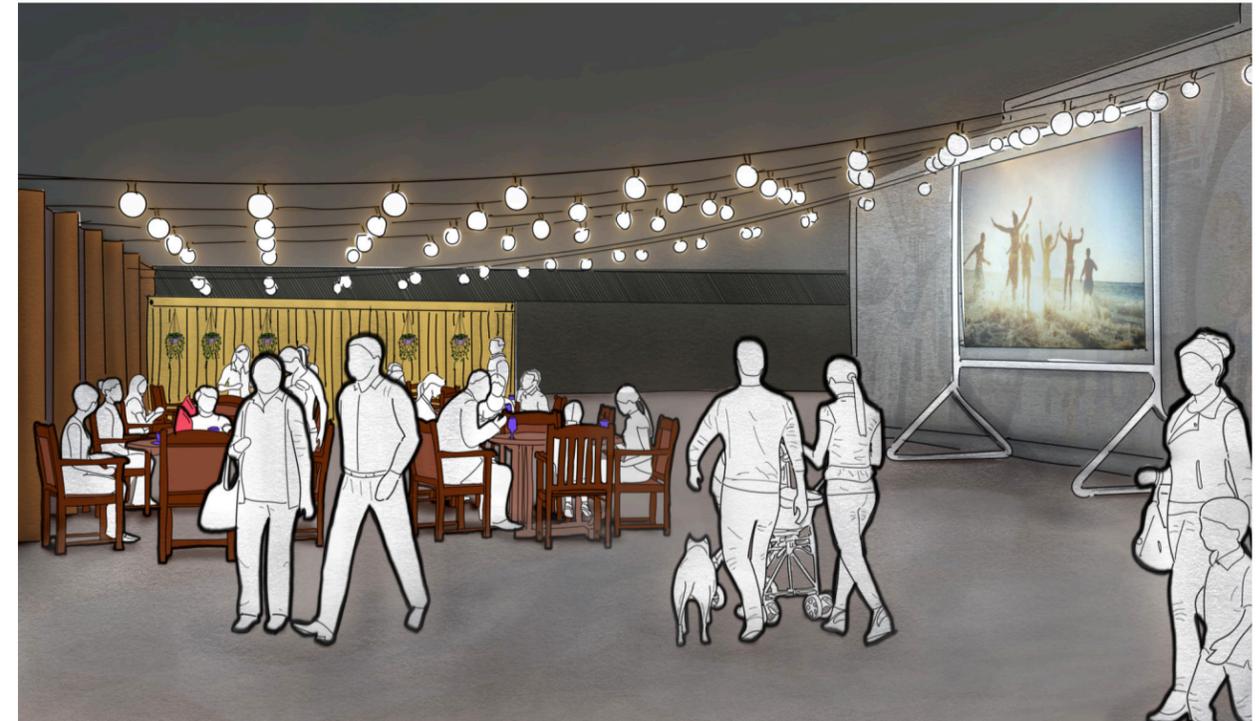
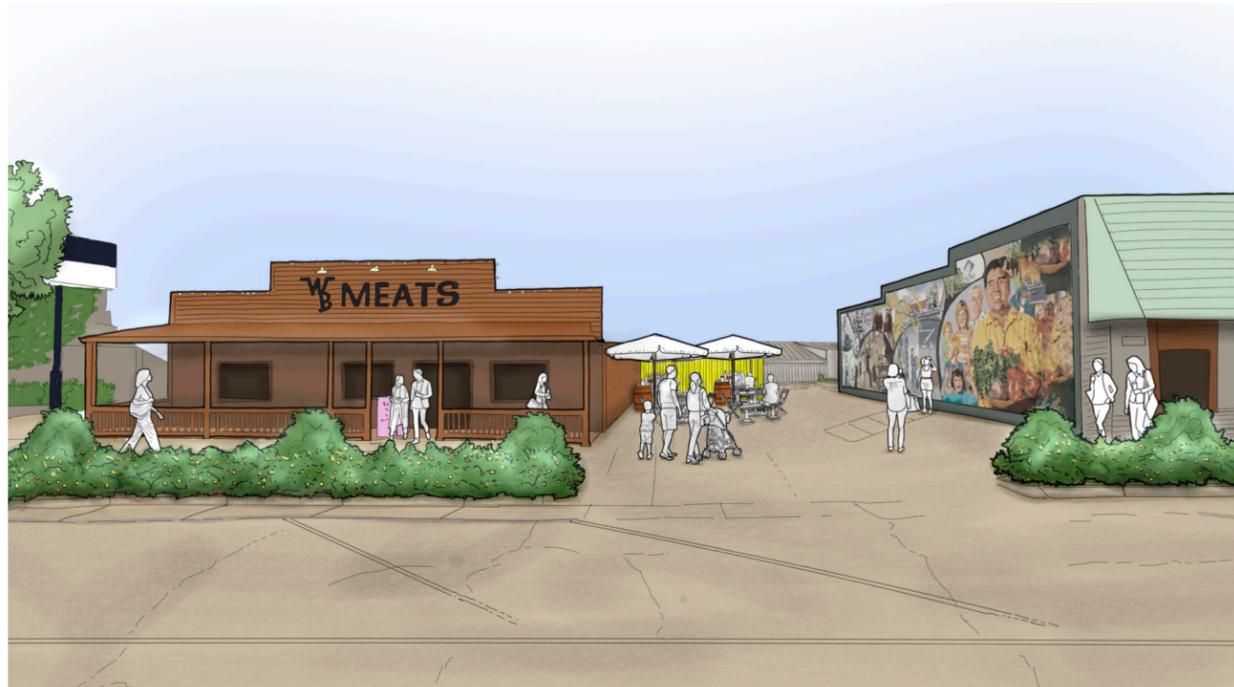
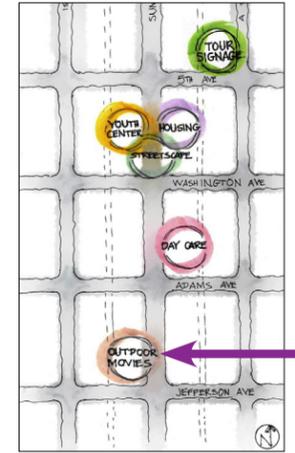
OUTDOOR DINING

Cultural
Dependable
Gathering



OUTDOOR MOVIE

Fun
Family-oriented
Festive



A hallmark of a livable community includes supporting places for people to meet and eat. Historic downtown Arkansas City lacks coffee shops, cafés, fine dining opportunities, or a grocery store. People living within walking distance of downtown, including Cowley College students, merit dependable food outlets. Food is a known setting for celebrating cultural diversity. Arkansas City could provide economic incentives for bringing culturally diverse restaurants into the downtown core area, much like the food fairs common during the summer festival season. Providing dependable food sources goes hand in hand with downtown housing initiatives.

Arkansas City residents currently enjoy outdoor movies at their annual summer events. Additional flexible spaces and provision of on-site storage facilities would allow easier set up and take down for these events, hopefully, leading to more fun family-oriented events. This image shows how an in-fill lot might be used to provide outdoor seating for dining and a movie. Note, a refurbished shipping container placed adjacent to the alley provides storage for moveable chairs, tables, and umbrellas. Overhead lighting and a portable moving screen add a festive touch to the night scene.

CONCLUSION

Revitalizing historic buildings along Summit Street through preservation-based economic development helps to create population density and promotes walkability. Rural economic developers are seeing a growth in people interested in living in historic downtowns. These are people who are tired of living with crime, expenses, and traffic associated with a major city; people interested in living in healthy, walkable communities where preservation of cultural significant buildings helps to create a sense of place. This study found that low cost of living and high quality of life are available in Arkansas City, making Arkansas City well positioned to be part of this larger Midwest trend of moving downtown.

REFERENCES

Anthropologie: Clothing retail company, <https://www.anthropologie.com>

Forbes Business, *Even in small towns, downtowns are hot again*. April 10, 2018 Iowa Brandvoice

Gray, C. (2005). *Performance based specifications for the built environment (domain 4 report) - PeBBu project*. Rotterdam: CIB. pp. 78. https://www.reading.ac.uk/PeBBu/state_of_art/urban_approaches/creative_city/creative_city.htm

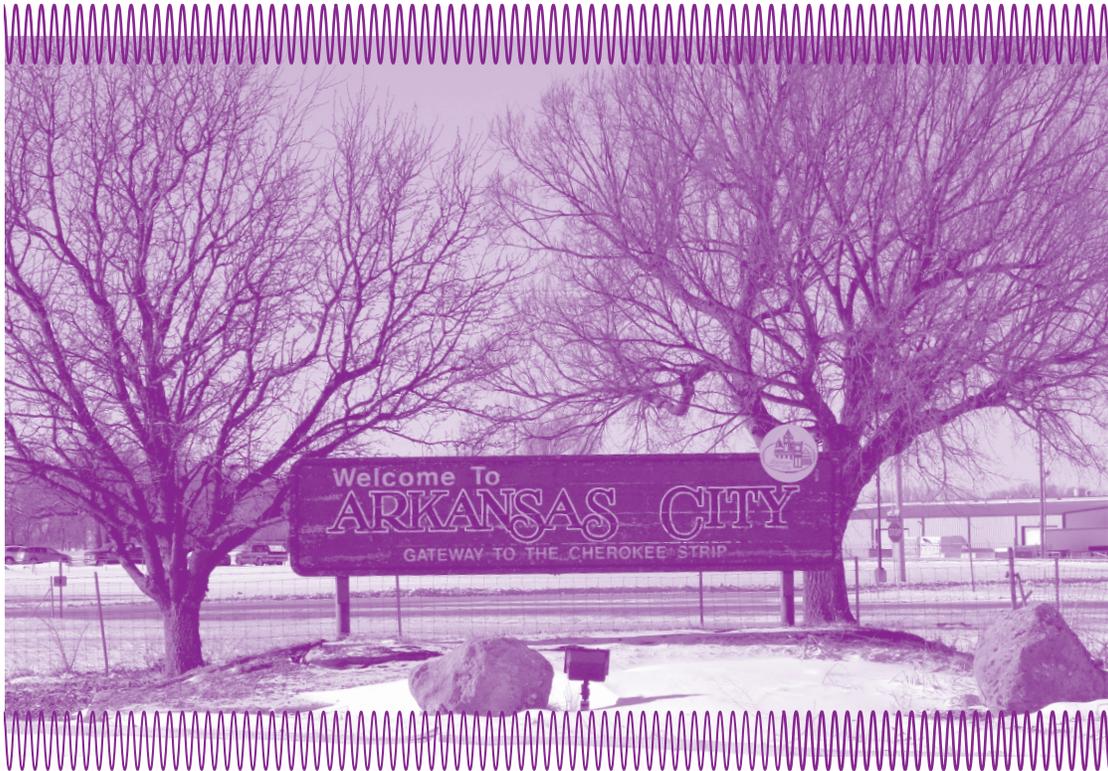
Jacobs, J. (1961). *The death and life of great American cities*. Vintage.

Markusen, A., & Gadwa, A. (2010). Arts and culture in Urban or rural planning: A review and research Agenda. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 29(3), 379–391. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X09354380>

Oldenburg, R. (1989). *The great good place*. Da Capo Press.

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Arkansas City city Kansas. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts>





TAB Partners

**School of Design
South Dakota State University**

Faculty

Pat Crawford, Ph.D., RLA
Elizabeth Tofte, Ph.D., RLA
Sejoo Han, Graphic Design
Ray Rayburn, Interior Design

Students

Elisabeth Riisnaes, Graphic Design
Jack Derickson, Graphic Design
Isa Torrez, Interior Design
Carter Peterson, Landscape Architecture
Elle Wertish, Landscape Architecture
Shylo Hilbert, Architecture
Maddie Palmquist, Architecture
Selma Subah, Architecture

CTOR Solutions

Sabine Martin, Ph.D., P.G.



Photo: Cynthia Runia