



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

AREAS OF CHANGE - PAST & FUTURE

Significant Growth

Downtown Madison has experienced tremendous growth since the last Downtown Plan was adopted in 2018. The rapidly changing skyline, and a 34% increase in residents has changed both the perceptions and realities of downtown living. Daily needs of residents and fewer downtown employees is shifting the retail and service economy.

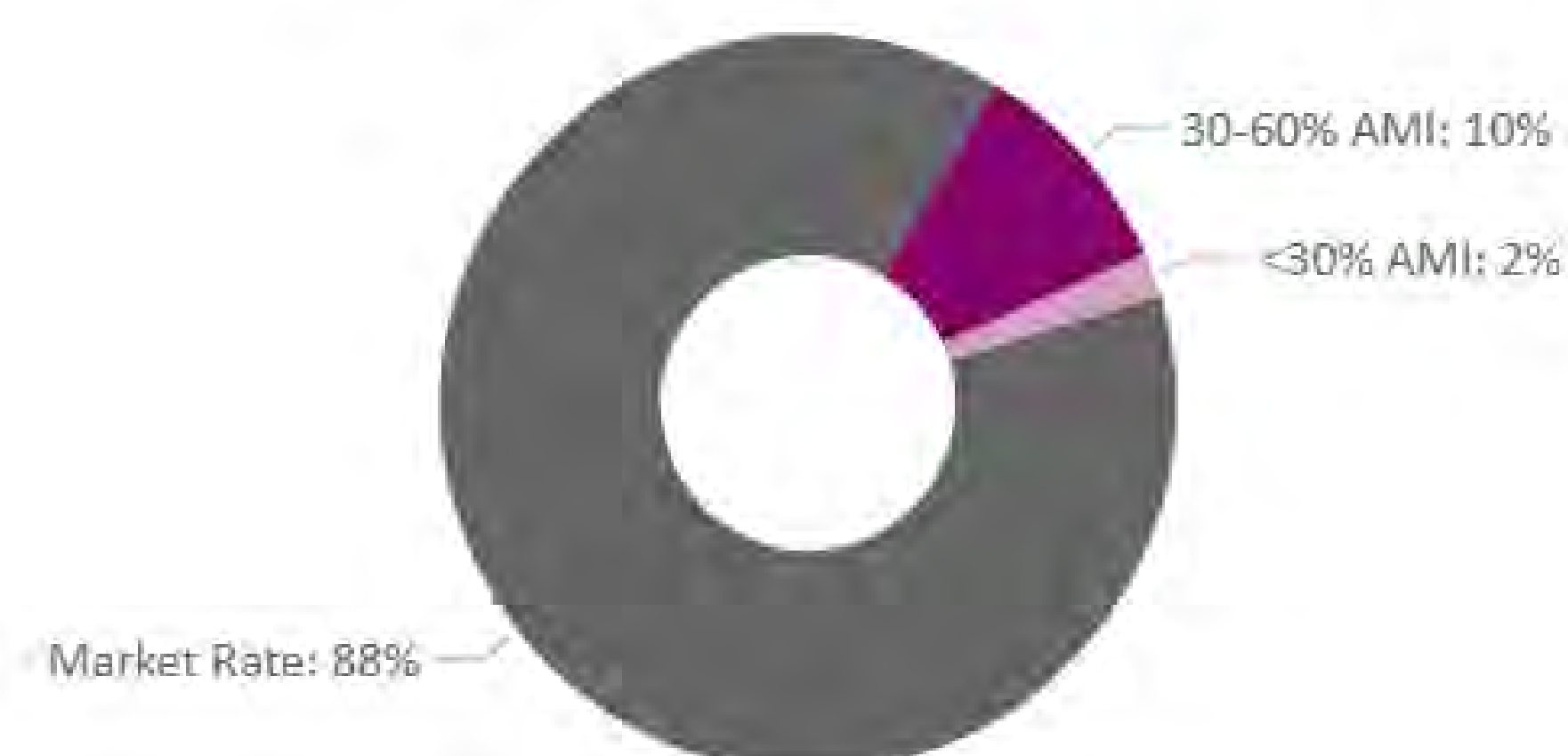
According to the latest City growth projections:

- » Madison will add more than 9,300 new households (approximately 18,400 people) by 2030.
- » The City of Madison is setting new housing targets to support the creation of 15,000 new homes by 2030, with at least a quarter (3,750) having long-term affordability at below-market rates.

Lookback: Affordable Homes Completed Since 2015



Lookback: Homes Completed Since 2015 by Level of Affordability



Over \$1.3 billion of investment

7,500 homes added
1/3 of all downtown housing

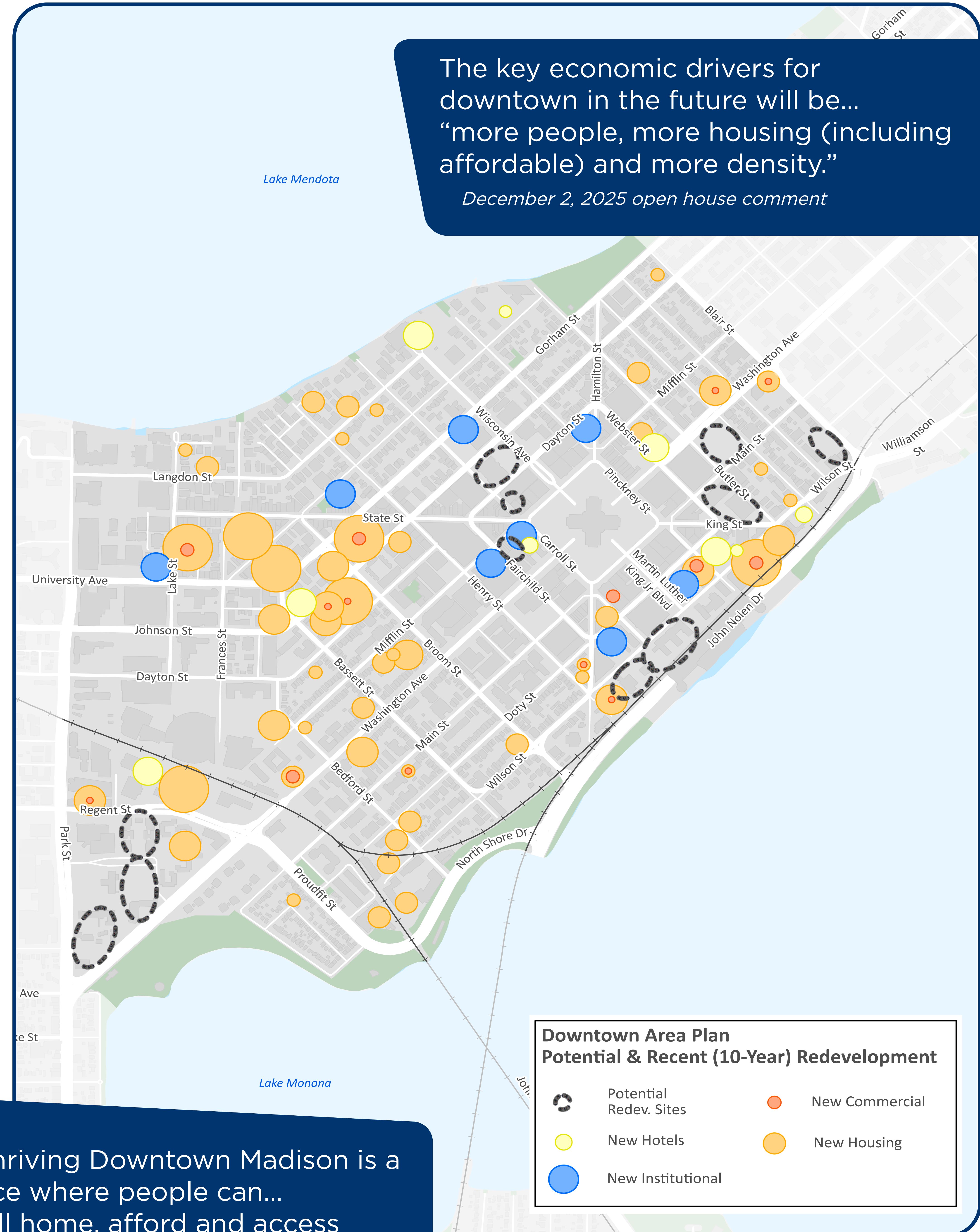
...but housing is less affordable
43% spend half of their income on rent

Over 660+ New Hotel Rooms

10+ Known Redevelopment Sites

The key economic drivers for downtown in the future will be...
“more people, more housing (including affordable) and more density.”

December 2, 2025 open house comment



A thriving Downtown Madison is a place where people can...
“Call home, afford and access everyday needs.”

December 2, 2025 open house comment



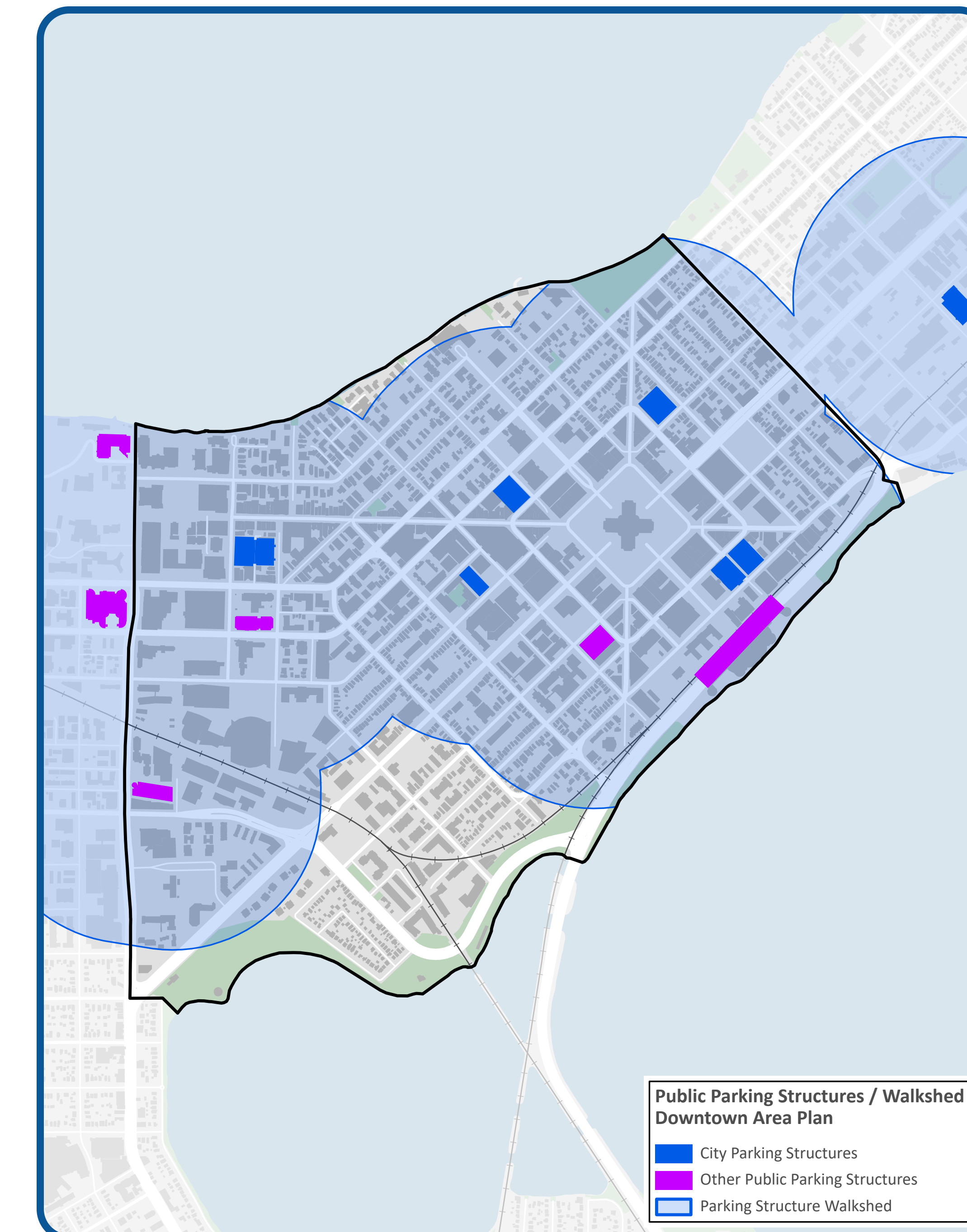
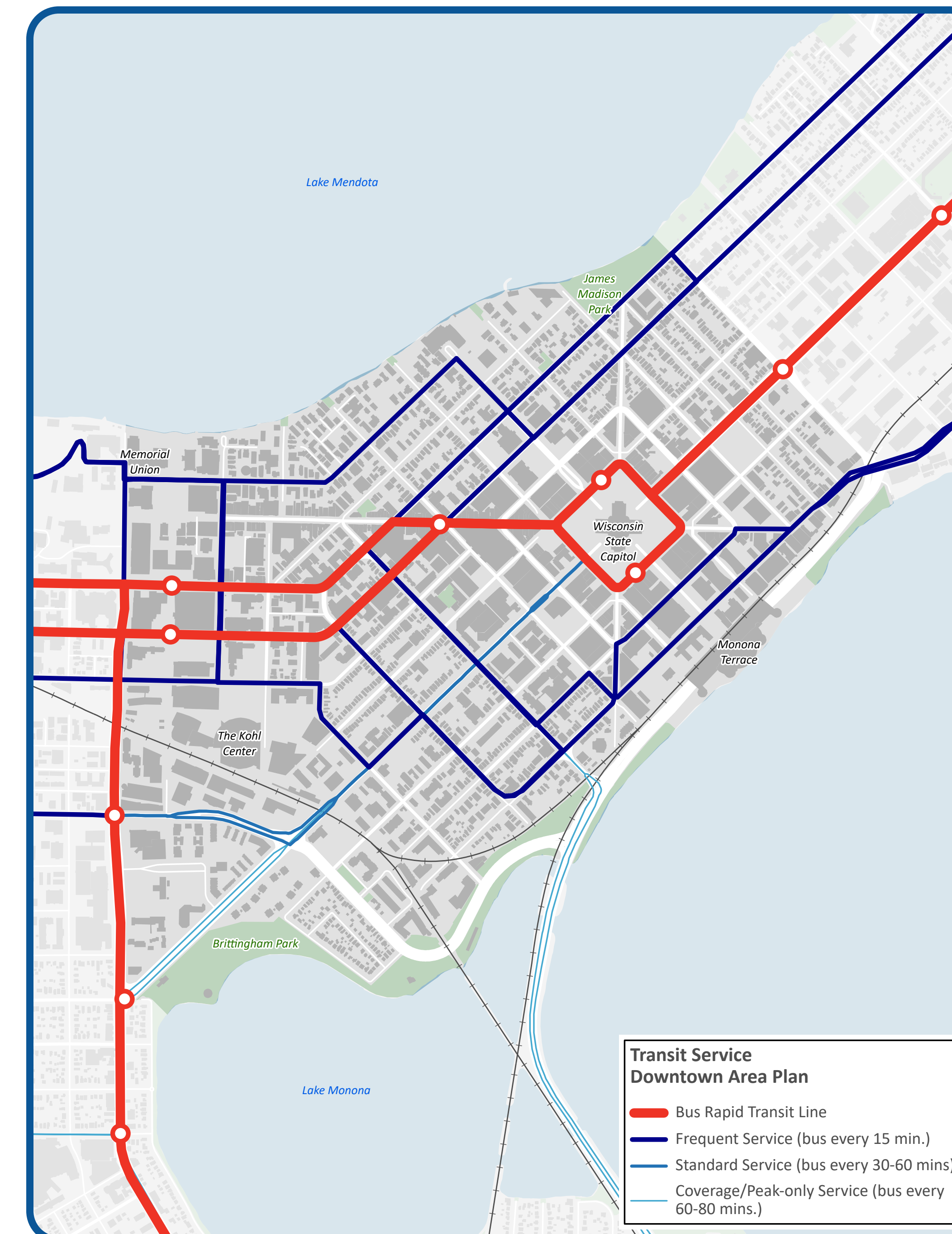
WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING GETTING TO DOWNTOWN

Travel Sheds

A thriving downtown needs to be accessible. Mobility for residents, employees and visitors is essential, and walking, biking and transit use support a more vibrant and livable downtown. Bus Rapid Transit was a major investment in transit, yielding a 22% increase in transit trips downtown. The All Ages and Abilities Bike Network is making cycling more comfortable and safer.

85,000 residents can get downtown
within 20 minutes by bike.

105,000 residents can get downtown
within 30 minutes via transit.



Transit

Downtown is the central hub of Metro Transit's network. Virtually all of downtown is within a 5 minute walk of a BRT station or other high-frequency bus route.

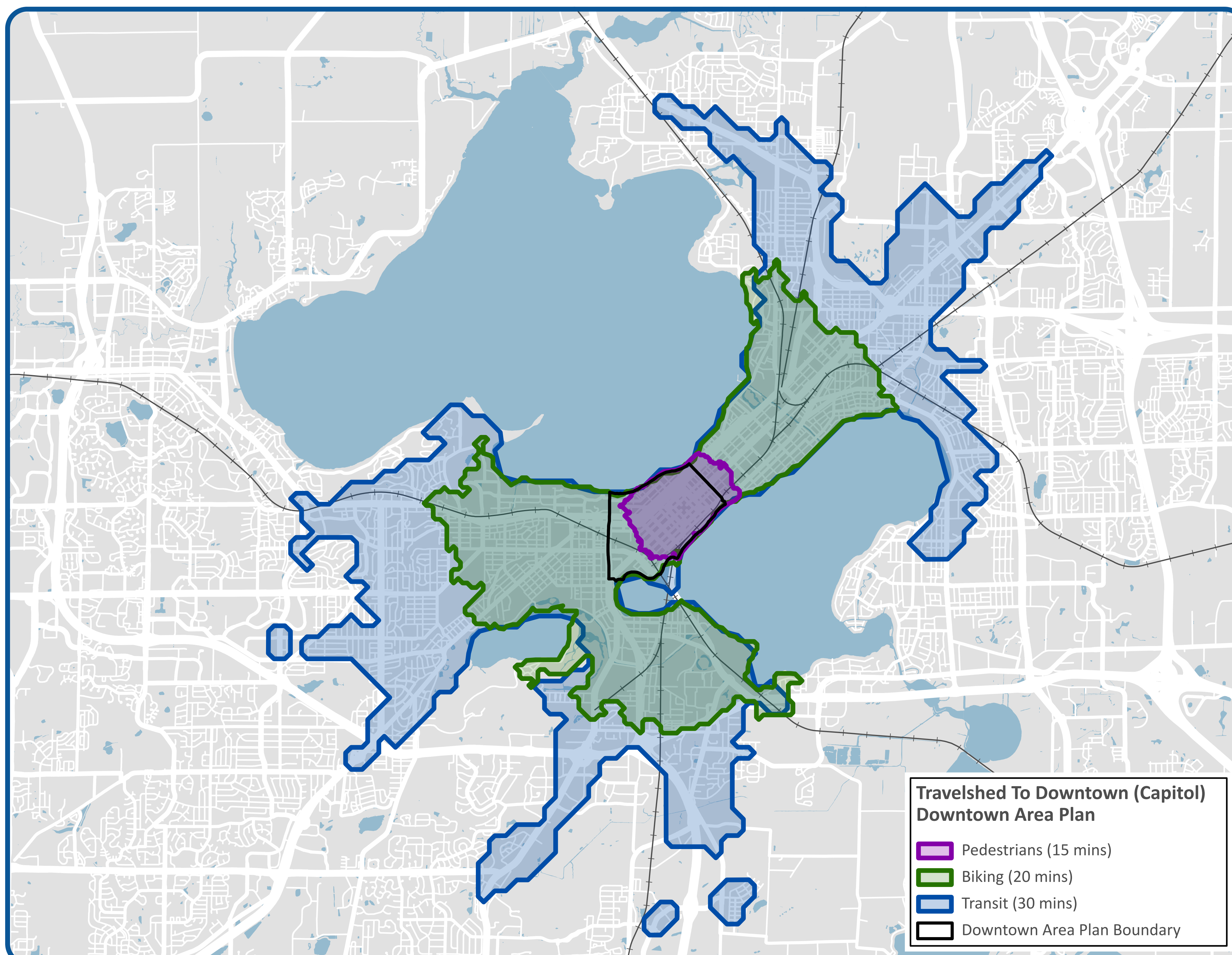


Park Once

When transit and biking aren't great options, a network of shared public parking structures are important. These support events, employers and residents and are distributed throughout downtown. Parking structures may become more important in the future as the City's Curb Management program comprehensively evaluates space currently used for on-street parking. Programs like Streatory showed what re-imagining these spaces could do.

"better public transit! everyone I know loves them and wish they were more accessible to different areas of the city and surrounding area and run more often. we want a city where car is not the only option to get around efficiently."

Madison Madness Comment





WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING ON TRACK FOR THE FUTURE: PASSENGER RAIL PLANNING

WisDOT Rail Study - Late 2023

WisDOT is awarded Federal funding to study enhancing and expanding passenger rail in Wisconsin, including an extension of the existing Hiawatha, connecting Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, Eau Claire, and the Twin Cities. Madison begins exploring passenger rail station options.

Station Area Evaluation - November 2023

City recommends Monona Lakefront area as one of two top recommended sites for a future passenger rail station in Madison. There are multiple station options with passenger access on Wilson Street, with a platform parallel to the existing tracks along John Nolen Drive.

Amtrak Service Plan - April 2026

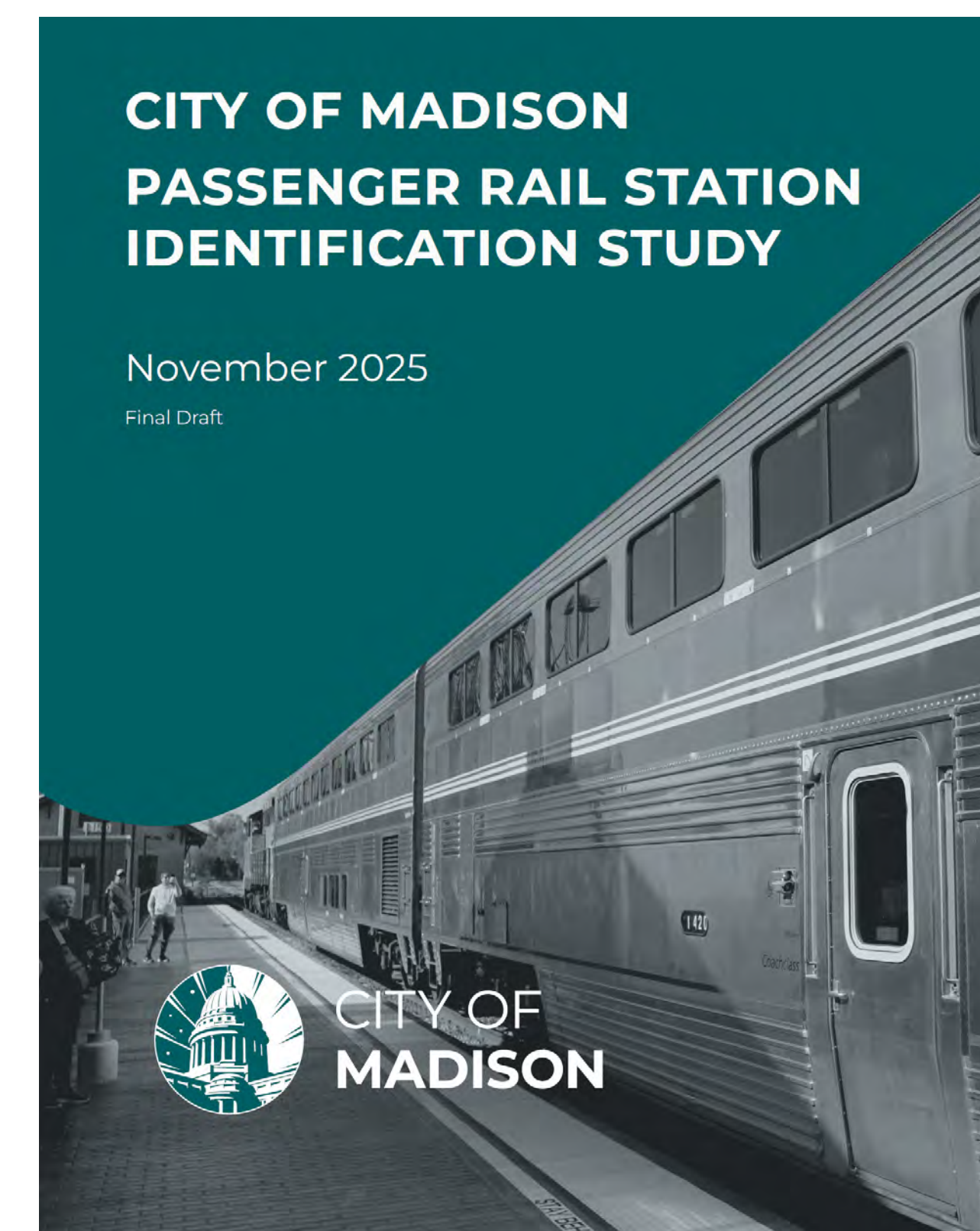
Amtrak announces plans to fast track an initial phase of service—dubbed Hiawatha West—which would include extending two roundtrips of the existing Hiawatha (Chicago - Milwaukee) to Madison with stops in Watertown and Pewaukee. The initial service would be served by a temporary station, preliminarily planned for the City-owned parking lot at 499 E. Wilson Street.

Service Start - Date TBD

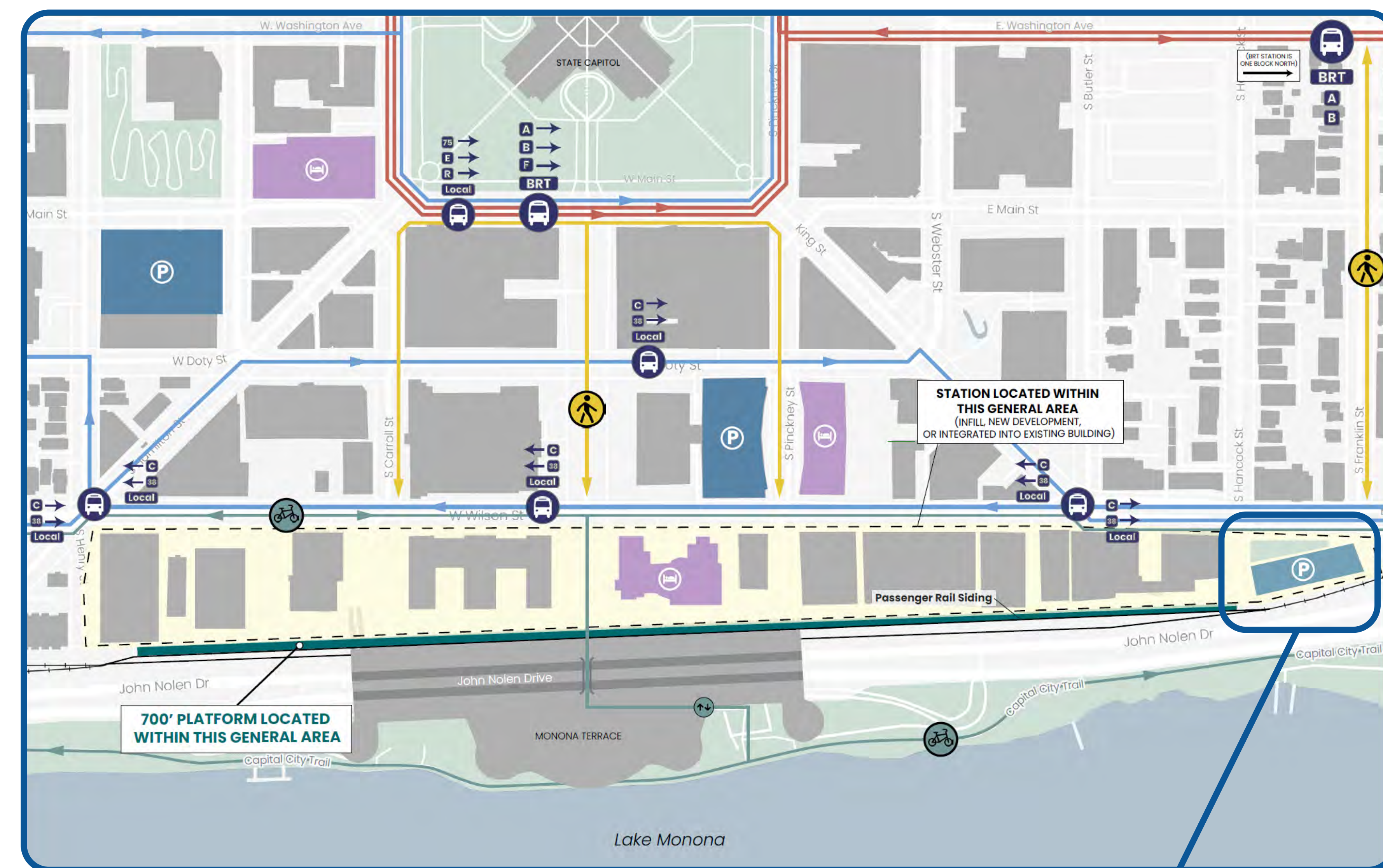
Although Amtrak hasn't promised a service start date, Madison continues to coordinate closely with Amtrak, WisDOT, host railroads, and Federal partners to be ready when funding for implementation is secured.

Future Service Expansion (additional roundtrips, faster speeds) and Extension to the Twin Cities.

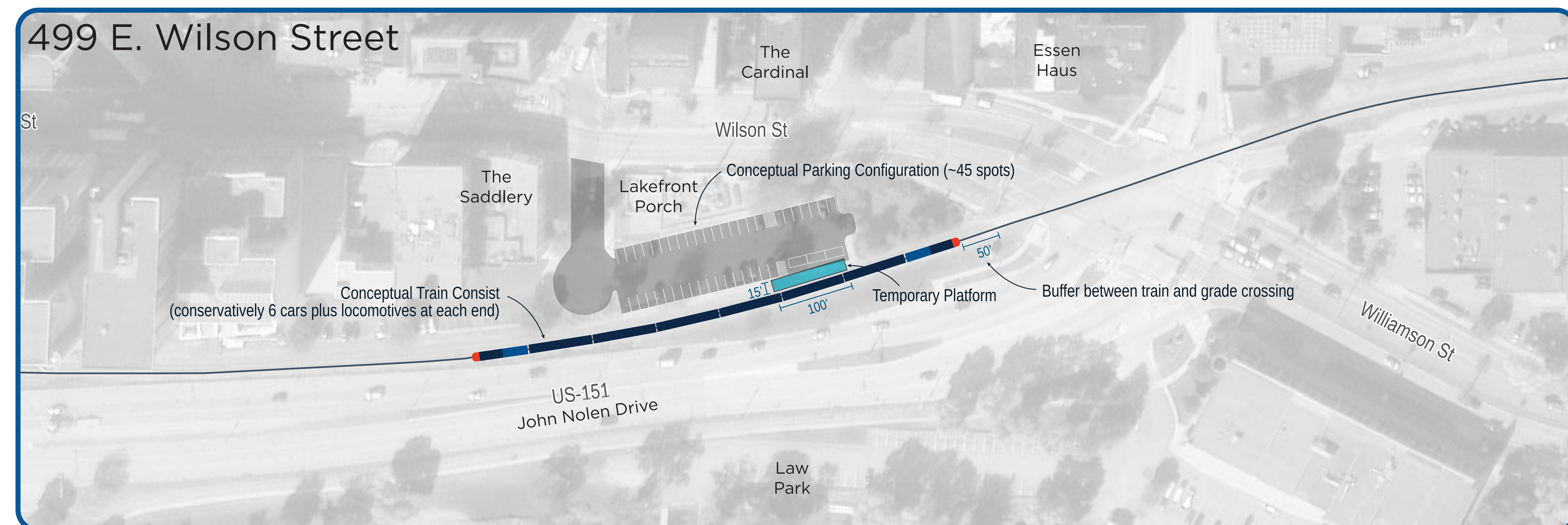
More information on Amtrak in Madison:
<https://amtraknewera.com/hiawatha-west/>



Monona Lakefront Site Area Overview



Recommended Temporary Station



Fun Fact! This site was home to the former Franklin Street Station, served by the Milwaukee Road in the early 1900s. The temporary station may include a 200 ft. platform with parking and drop-off on City-owned land.

Well-connected by transit, biking, and walking; additional parking at nearby Wilson Street Garage.



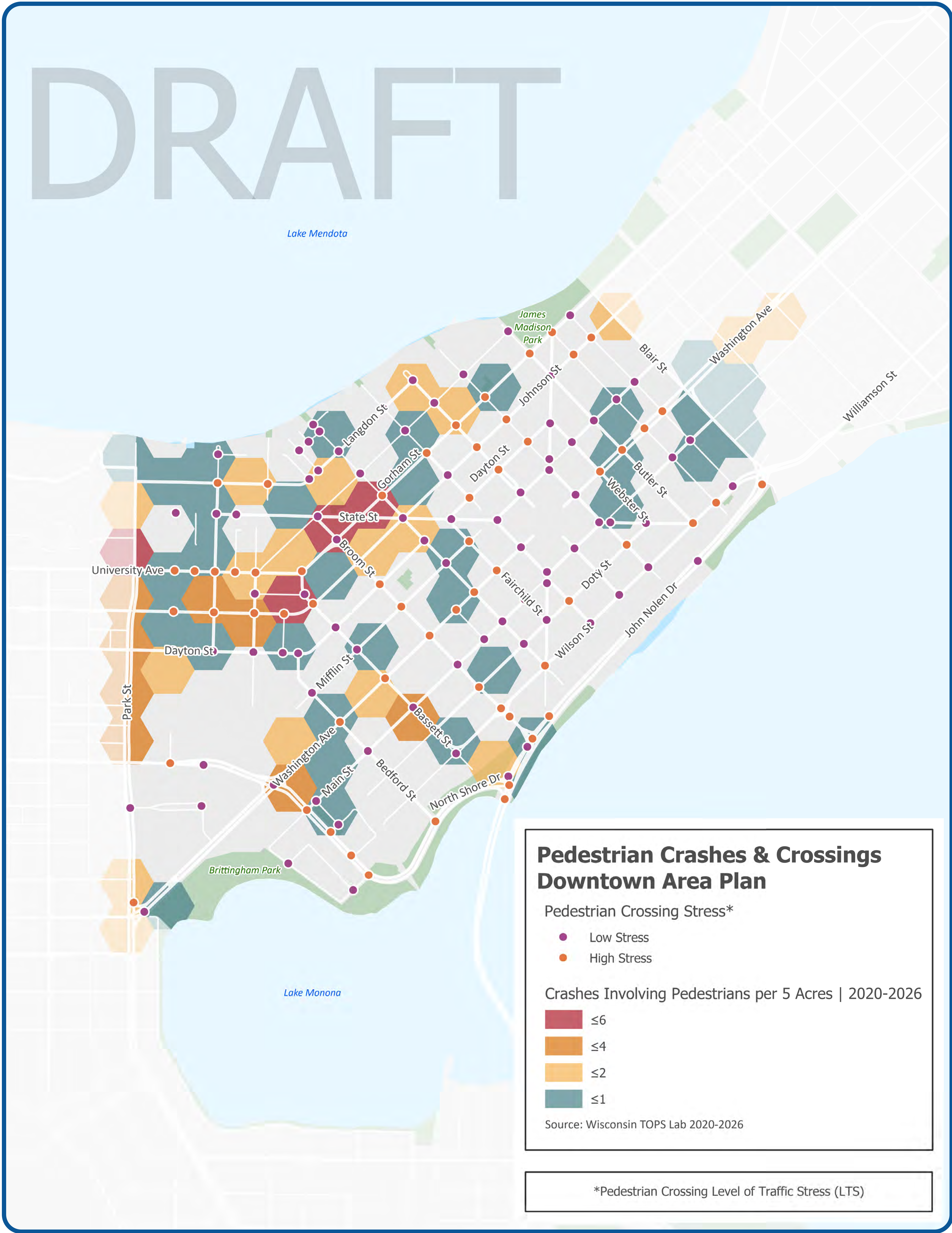


WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING GETTING AROUND DOWNTOWN

IDENTIFYING SAFETY & CONNECTIVITY CAPS

Pedestrian Comfort

Downtown Madison offers an excellent network of sidewalks and paths for walking and rolling. While the Downtown area is already very walkable, there are still opportunities to enhance the overall pedestrian experience through traffic safety and street crossing improvements.



The High Comfort (AAA) Bike Network is still a draft. Comments are being accepted until noon on May 11th, 2026



Bicycle Network

Many of the streets and paths in Downtown Madison are included in the City's All Ages & Abilities Bicycle Network. However, not all of these streets and paths feel comfortable and safe for all bicyclists. Bike facilities shown as high comfort are suitable for most bicyclists whereas those shown as not currently high comfort need upgrades to serve everyone comfortably.



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

As Downtown Madison welcomes more and more new neighbors, visitors and employees, the demands on existing park and open spaces becomes more acute. Addressing open space needs may include:

- » Improving existing park and public open spaces that are underutilized
- » Creating plaza and linear open spaces along streets and paths
- » Creating new public parks or other open spaces in deficient areas
- » Enhancing access to the lakefront and water itself

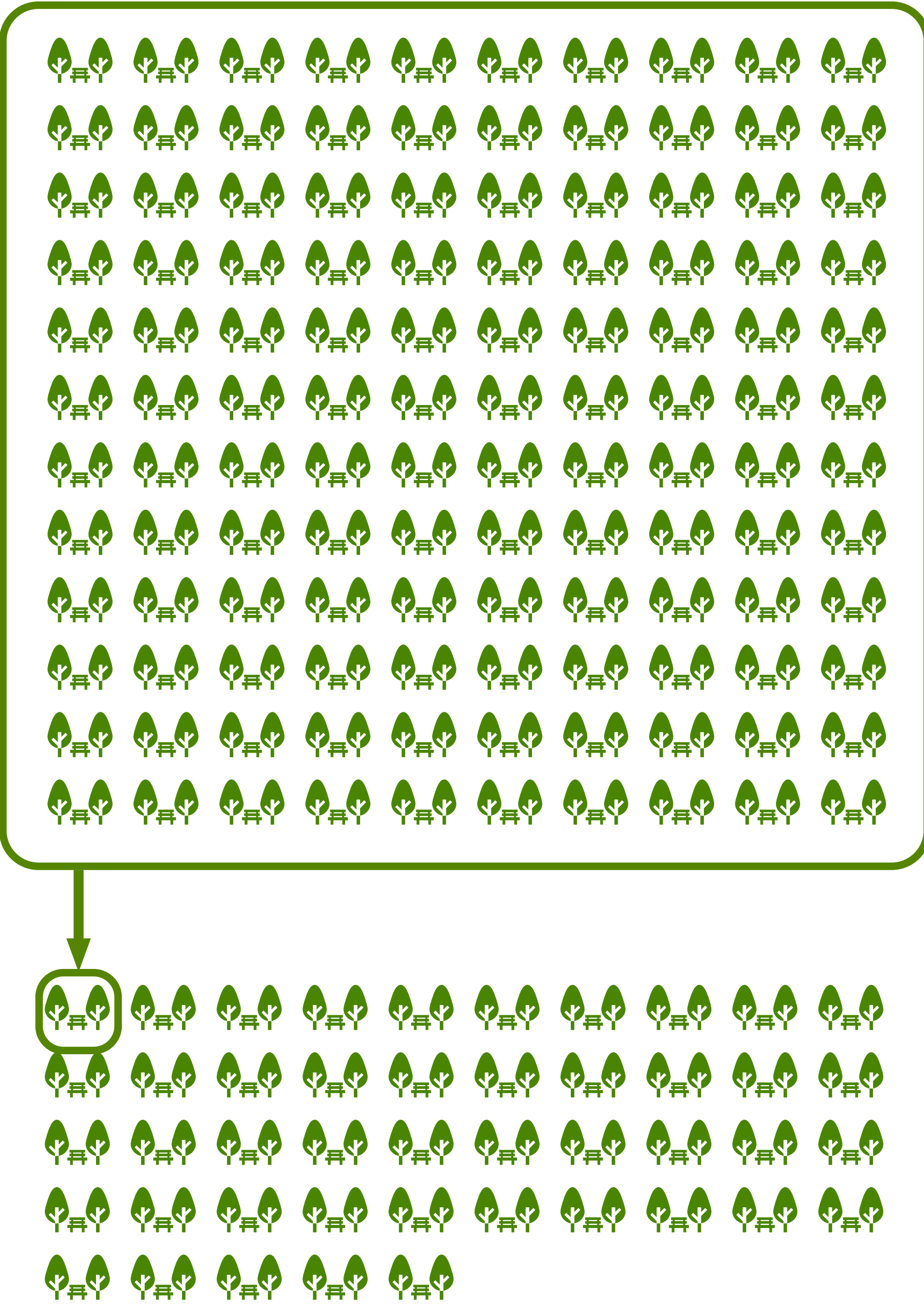


“We’ve added tons of housing downtown. Now we need to keep it livable - more trees and plants and parks.”
Madison Madness Comment

Since 2010, 7,500 new homes were built downtown.

In areas with more undeveloped land, this growth could have generated 120 acres of parkland through the parkland dedication process. When land isn’t dedicated, developers must pay into a park acquisition fund.

Obtaining land for parks in downtown is far more difficult than in outlying areas. Since 2010, the downtown added 1/2 acre of park, bringing total parkland to approximately 45 acres.



The Lakeway Project is a major effort to enhance the waterfront and will be a generational investment in public space downtown

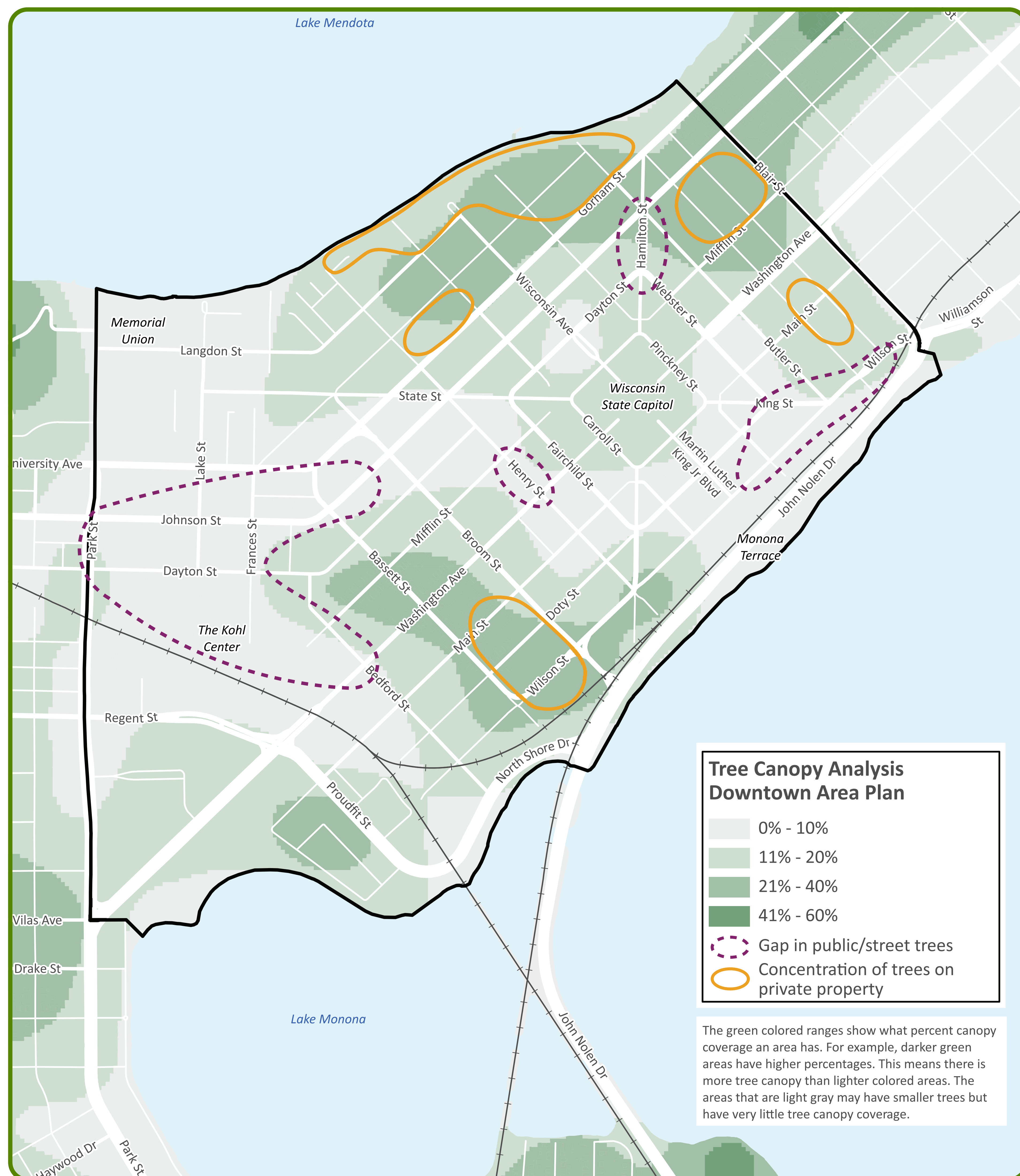




WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING TREE CANOPY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Benefits of Trees

Trees provide many benefits to communities. They remove air pollutants, capture storm water, reduce cooling costs, absorb noise, and more. The City is using innovative techniques to improve tree health and size. Underground infrastructure is installed in some places to increase soil volume and enhance tree growth. City ordinances were updated in 2025 to protect street trees during construction projects.



3,681

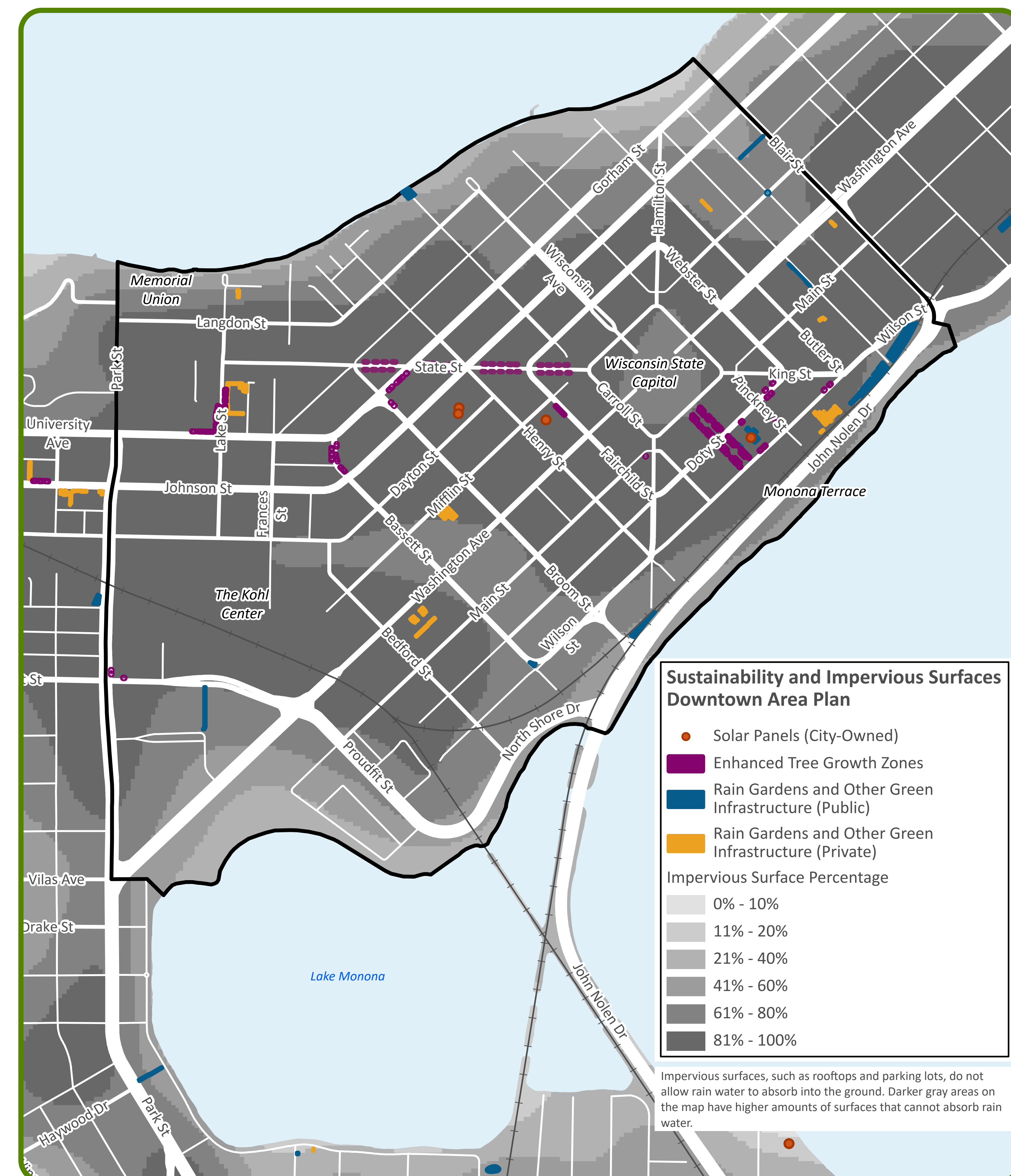
Trees in the public
right-of-way and in
City parks

156,000

Pounds of carbon
absorbed over 10
years

1.4 million

Gallons of
stormwater
runoff avoided
over 10 years



Tree Species Diversity

- » Tree species diversity is critical to a having resilient tree canopy.
- » At least 140 different tree species make up the trees in parks and along streets downtown.
- » The most common tree species in downtown are:

1

Honeylocust: 872 trees

2

Elm: 507 trees

3

Ash: 401 trees

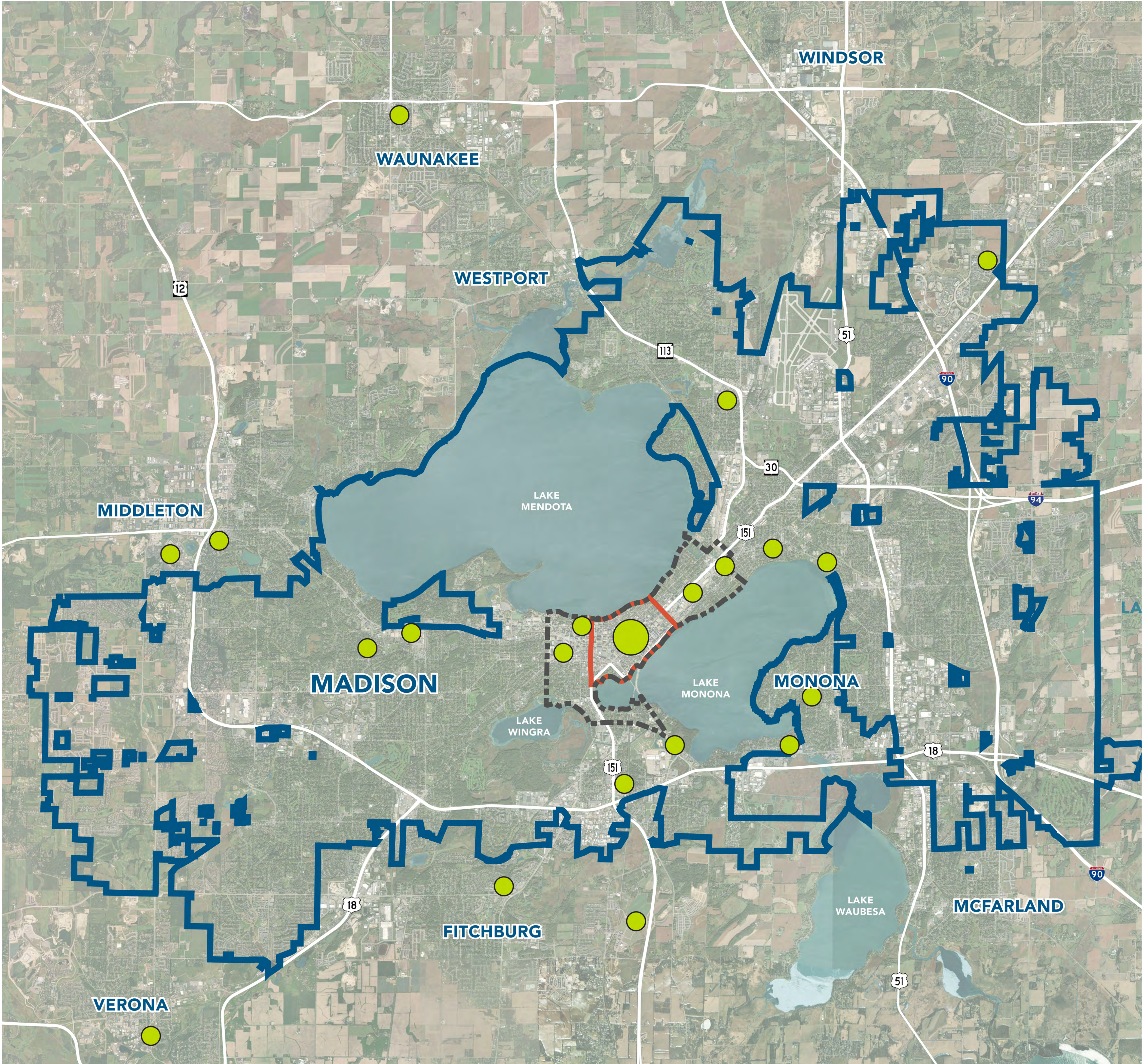
4

Maple: 344 trees



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



MADISON GREATER DOWNTOWN

REGIONAL CONTEXT

LEGEND

- Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy (GDEIS) Boundary
- Downtown Area Plan (DAP) Boundary
- Madison City Limits
- Downtown Destination Districts

DOWNTOWN AT A CROSSROADS

Downtown has grown fast, outpacing citywide and regional growth since 2010. This momentum creates both opportunity and urgency. **Rising costs, shifting visitor and workforce patterns, limited land, and access constraints impact Downtown’s vitality and challenge future growth.** Increasing competition from other regional attractions requires Downtown to reimagine what makes it unique and desirable to users. Decisions and actions taken now will shape what Downtown looks and feels like as growth continues here and across the region.

- +55%** Downtown total population growth 2010-2023
- +20%** Madison citywide total population growth 2010-2023
- +18%** Dane County total population growth 2010-2023

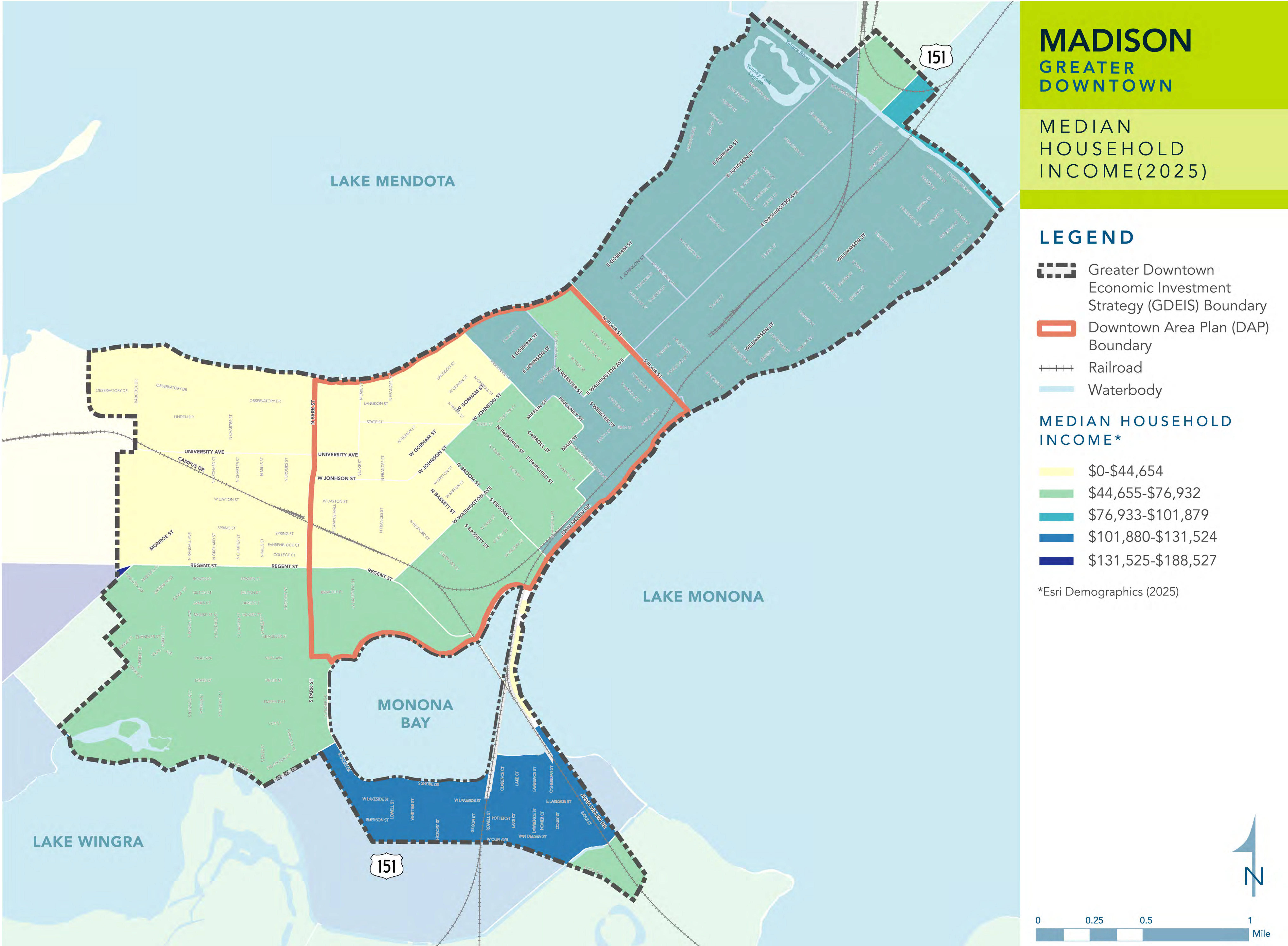
Big Moves Supported

Come on Down(town)	Create Unforgettable Districts	Put the “There” Back in State and Square	Reimagine People Spaces and Places	Feel the Lake Effect
Drive the Next Gen Economy	Make Downtown a Diverse and Complete Neighborhood	Elevate the Arts, Culture, & Entertainment Scene	Become the Healthiest and Greenest Downtown	Infuse Learning, Play, and Discovery



WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



WHO'S HERE, WHO'S COMING, AND WHO'S MISSING

Downtown's **current users skew towards students, higher-income workers, and visitors.** The mix of housing, retail, and recreation reflects that. At the same time, some categories - **families with children, seniors, lower-income workers, and people of color** - are missing or underrepresented among Downtown's users. The mix of housing options, shopping and dining locations, and event and programming attractions can better support a wider audience that intentionally invites missing and underrepresented users into Downtown and encourages them to stay for longer. A Downtown that works for all is stronger and more resilient - economically and otherwise.

- 73%** White residents
- 70%** Residents with a bachelor's degree or higher
- 20%** Housing units reserved for students

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WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



GETTING TO AND THROUGH DOWNTOWN

Nearly 75% of people who work in Downtown and 90% of people who visit Downtown for events, shopping, and recreation live outside of Downtown. Most of these people drive - **parking and traffic are major constraints**. Those that use **public transit and other modes (like cycling and walking)** encounter **physical barriers, schedule and spatial gaps, and perceived safety concerns** that constrain their ability to get Downtown. Once in the Downtown, many users - regardless of how they get Downtown in the first place - experience gaps between attractions. Walkable connections must be improved with denser and more diverse attractions, streetscape improvements, and safety enhancements.

- >50%** Commuters to Downtown that drive alone to work
- >90%** Commuters to Downtown that leave Downtown without lingering
- 67%** Trips into Downtown by people that live within 50 miles

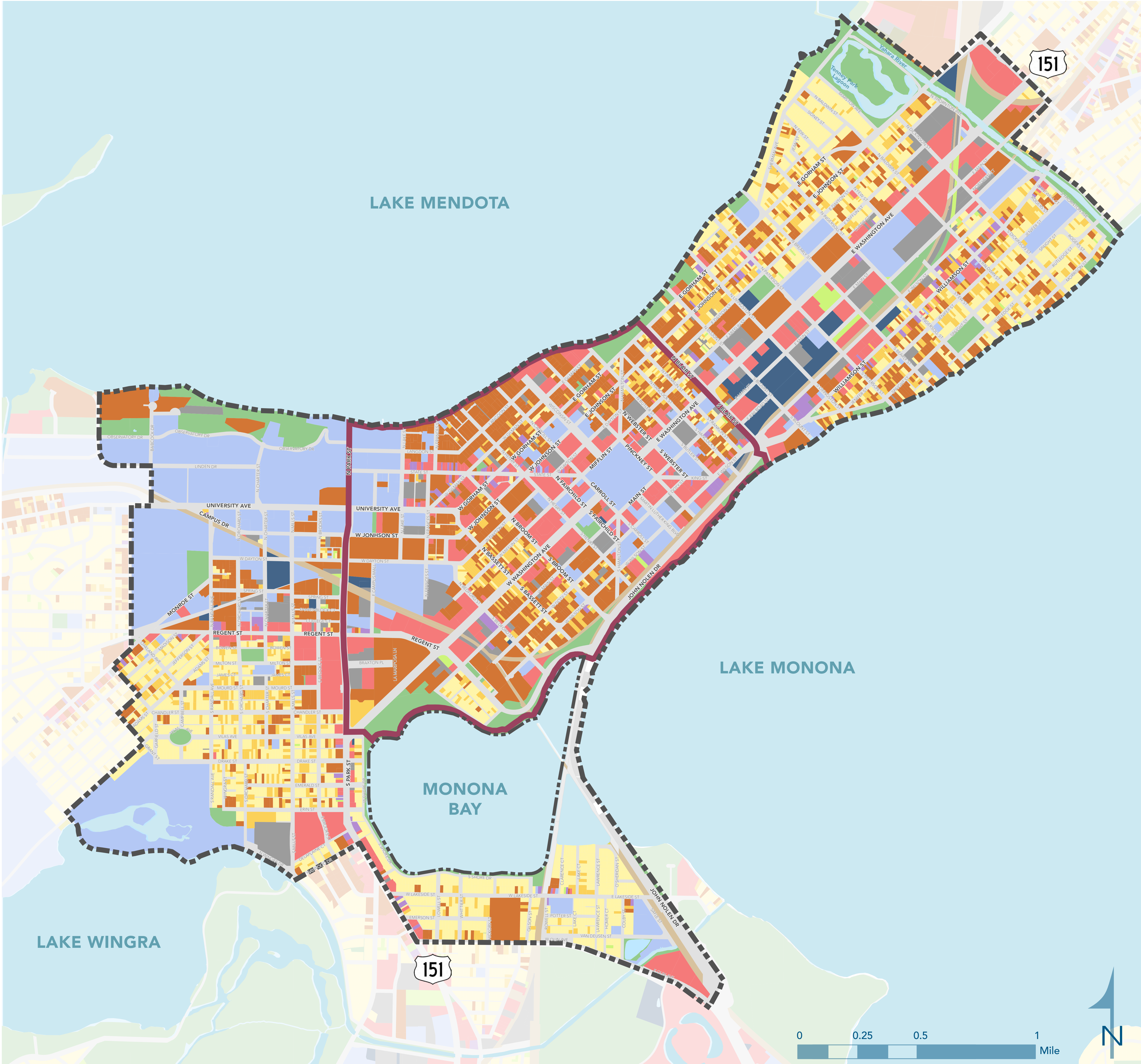
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MADISON GREATER DOWNTOWN

EXISTING LAND USE

LEGEND

- Greater Downtown Economic Investment Strategy Boundary
- Downtown Area Plan Boundary

LAND USE TYPE

- Right-of-Way
583.4 acres, 26.6%
- Institutional/Governmental
337.0 acres, 15.4%
- Multi-Family Residential
329.8 acres, 15.1%
- Single-Family Residential
267.4 acres, 12.2%
- Commercial
198.3 acres, 9.1%
- Parks and Recreation
135.0 acres, 6.2%
- Two-Family Residential
125.0 acres, 5.7%
- Automobile Parking
50.0 acres, 2.3%
- Rail ROW
40.4 acres, 1.8%
- Industrial
36.7 acres, 1.7%
- Communication/Utilities
34.7 acres, 1.6%
- Water
23.9 acres, 1.1%
- Mixed-Use
18.9 acres, 0.9%
- Vacant Subdivided Land
8.1 acres, 0.4%
- Agricultural & Open Land
0.3 acres, 0.0%

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMY

Downtown's economy is driven by four key pillars: UW-Madison, government offices, fast-growing creative and innovation sectors, and a thriving hospitality and tourism market. Each provides real strengths, but each also has vulnerabilities. Remote and hybrid work shifts thinned out the weekday population. State office consolidation cut into a once-sizable worker base. Innovation and tech jobs are growing faster in other regional hubs than they are Downtown. Visitors are also spending an increasing share of their time outside of Downtown, though Downtown remains the primary regional draw. **Amidst growing regional competition and broader workforce shifts, Downtown needs renewed attention** to attract and retain jobs and commercial assets.

+280% Job growth in tech and innovation sector, 2015-2024

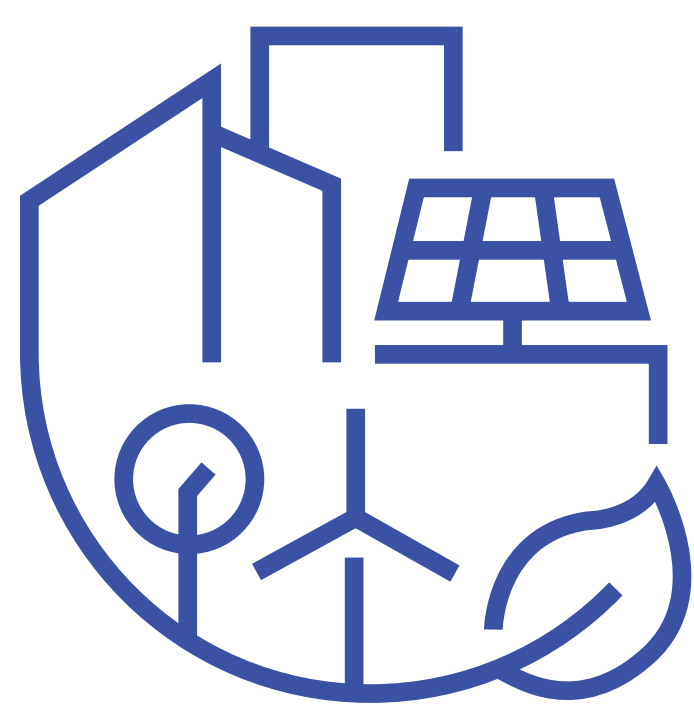
3.4K State jobs relocated out of Downtown in 2025

3-4x Increase in remote/hybrid workers whose jobs are based in Downtown since 2020

Big Moves Supported

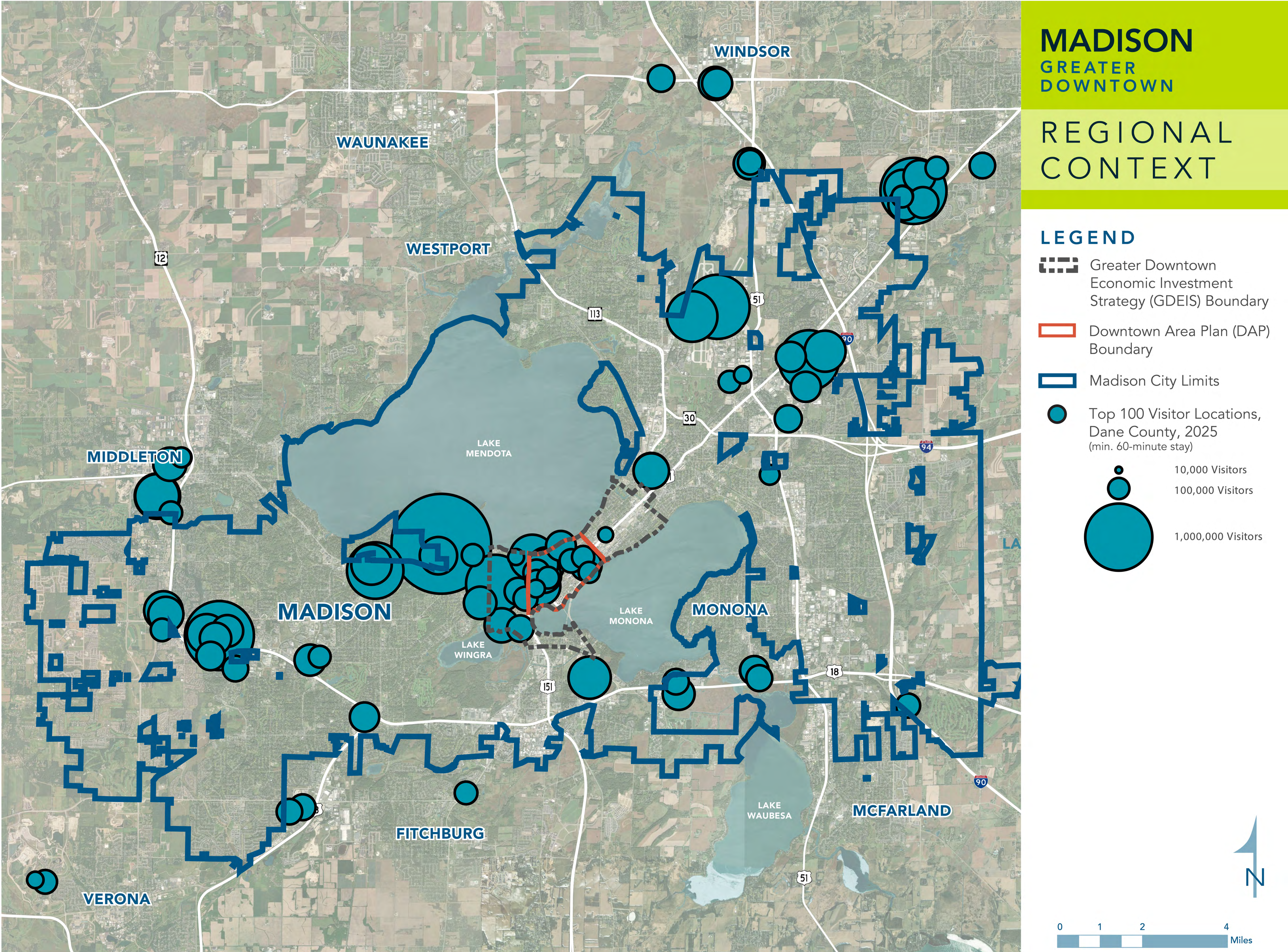
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WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

People who visit Downtown - including Madison and Dane County residents as well as visitors from further away - are a major economic driver. These “guests” in Downtown support local businesses, patronize arts & cultural institutions, and create a consistent presence that supports a strong sense of place. At the same time, the tourism & hospitality sectors face challenges. Affordability, public safety perceptions, and physical access to and within Downtown may discourage guests from coming Downtown or staying longer. Meanwhile, growing regional competition creates strong attractions for people elsewhere in and around Dane County. Improvements that grow, diversify, and connect Downtown attractions - including shops and restaurants, cultural institutions, and outdoor spaces like the lakes - can help support a thriving guest experience and drive economic activity.

60% Guests to Dane County that never set foot in Downtown Madison in 2025

\$327M Visitor spending in Downtown, 2024

\$1B+ Annual economic impact of arts & cultural attractions in Dane County

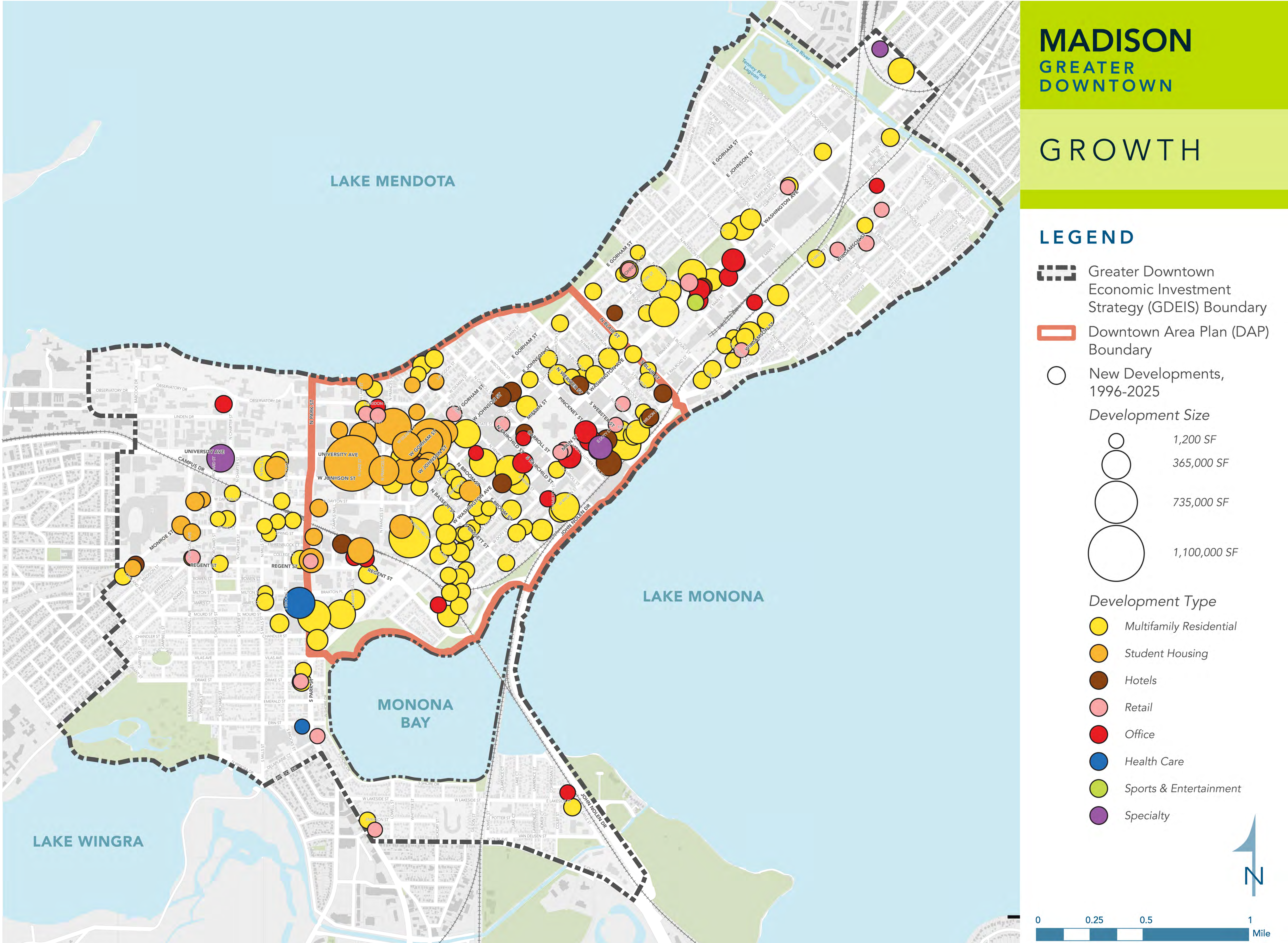
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WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS



HOUSING & REAL ESTATE

Downtown has dramatically increased its housing stock and grown commercial real estate offerings in the last 15 years. Investors and businesses look here first for opportunities to build and grow. However, mounting affordability pressures and demand for a wider diversity of physical spaces create barriers for residents, businesses, and developers looking to enter or remain in Downtown. A wider range of housing options, including affordable units, family and workforce housing, condos and homeownership opportunities, and senior and supportive housing are needed to make Downtown a welcoming place to live for all. Meanwhile, real estate investment must diversify and expand office and retail offerings in a constrained physical environment with few clear sites for catalytic development.

7.5K New housing units built 2010-2025

55% Cost-burdened renters (30%+ of income spent on housing costs)

900k Square feet of commercial real estate currently in development pipeline

Big Moves Supported

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