



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK EMERGING VISION AND VALUES



WHERE DID THESE COME FROM?

The City's Imagine Madison Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI) Strategic Plan together define key goals and values that guide the future of Downtown. The Strategic Plan includes a set of five paired values to help articulate how DMI and its members advance the vision for Downtown. One new, sixth vision element has also emerged as a consistent theme in conversations about how Downtown can continue to evolve and improve. Through the Envision Downtown engagement process, these priorities have been strongly reinforced by the community and are reflected here as the Vision Elements and Values for Greater Downtown.

Please review the Vision Elements and Values below and share your feedback on the next board.

1

Experiential & Engaging Downtown

Greater Downtown is a multi-faceted gathering place that offers immersive and memorable experiences for all. Through a unique and dynamic collection of destinations, events, programming, and public spaces, Greater Downtown cultivates authentic connections to people and place.

2

Economically Vibrant & Inclusive Downtown

Greater Downtown is an economically thriving mixed-use activity center with businesses, diverse employment, housing, shopping, dining, cultural, and entertainment offerings that attract, serve, and reflect all Madison residents.

3

Safe & Welcoming Downtown

The Greater Downtown environment and experience are comfortable and inviting for all employers, employees, residents, and visitors regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mobility, or other identifying characteristics.

4

Diverse & Equitable Downtown

Greater Downtown celebrates the diversity and history of the Madison community. Through intentional inclusivity, dedicated resources, cultural competency, collaborative partnerships, and authentic representation, downtown creates spaces where everyone belongs and independent, minority, and women leaders and entrepreneurs are actively supported, empowered, and celebrated.

5

Connected & Accessible Downtown

Greater Downtown promotes accessible movement and mobility in and around Downtown with well-connected, multi-modal transportation networks that link key destinations, services, retail, entertainment, and the lakes is essential for a healthy and thriving Downtown.

6

Sustainable & Resilient Downtown

Greater Downtown Madison embraces sustainability and resilience as core principles for our future. By working together to address environmental, social, and economic challenges, the Greater Downtown creates adaptive solutions and lasting impact through education, advocacy, and collaborative partnerships that ensure continued prosperity and vitality for all.

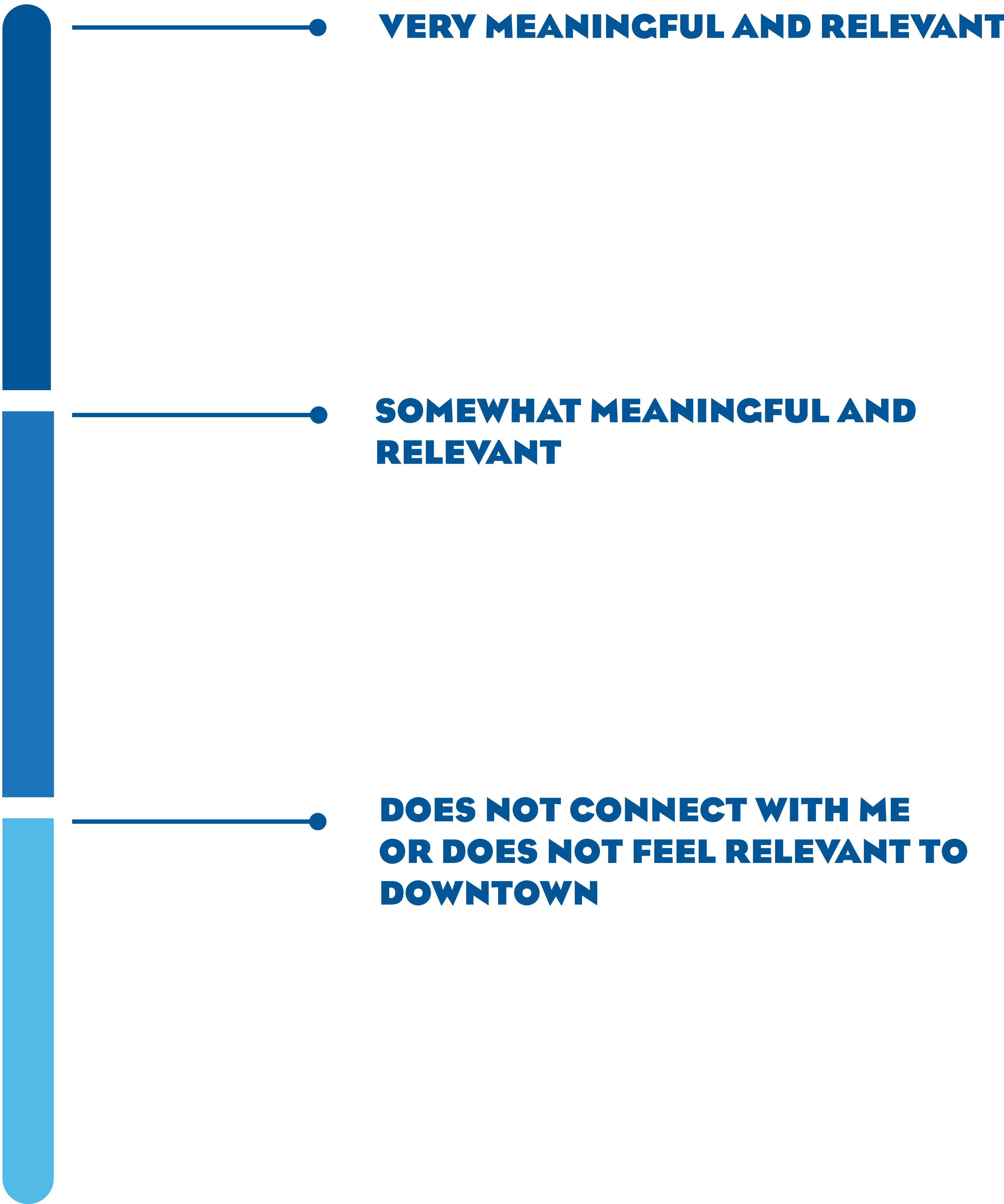




SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK EMERGING VISION ELEMENTS

TEMPERATURE CHECK! DO THE VISION ELEMENTS & VALUES REFLECT THE FUTURE YOU WANT?

Place a dot on the scale below to identify how meaningful the vision elements and values are to you, and how strongly they reflect the future you want.



WHAT RESONATES MOST WITH YOU?

Choose your top two: Place a dot next to the two vision elements and values that resonate most with you.

Experiential & Engaging Downtown	1	Diverse & Equitable Downtown	4
Economically Vibrant & Inclusive Downtown	2	Connected & Accessible Downtown	5
Safe & Welcoming Downtown	3	Sustainable & Resilient Downtown	6

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE MISSING?

Add a comment to provide additional feedback.



ENVISION MADISON THE TEN BIG MOVES

Welcome to the conversation!

Greater Downtown Madison is evolving—and we want your input.

We're introducing 10 draft Big Moves that represent early ideas for how Downtown could grow and improve over time. These are not final decisions or commitments, but examples meant to spark conversation and gather feedback.

Step 1: Review the Big Moves

Review each Big Move and consider its potential impact on Downtown.

Step 2: Rate the Impact

For each Big Move, place a dot sticker on the scale to indicate the level of impact you think it would have on downtown.

Step 3: Go Deeper (Optional)

If you want to share more detailed ideas, scan the QR code to provide feedback on potential partnerships, implementation ideas, opportunities, concerns, or additional areas of impact we should consider



SCAN ME!



WHAT THESE BIG MOVES ARE

- » Early ideas for how Downtown could evolve
- » Based on community input, planning work, and existing strengths
- » Meant to explore possibilities—not select final projects
- » A starting point for understanding potential directions

WHAT THESE BIG MOVES ARE NOT

- » Final plans or approved projects
- » Funding commitments or construction schedules
- » Fixed priorities or guaranteed outcomes
- » The only ideas being considered for Downtown

YOUR INPUT SHAPES WHAT COMES NEXT!

These Big Moves will be refined based on community feedback and further analysis. Your ideas will help shape the next phase of planning for Greater Downtown Madison.

THE BIG MOVES COME ON DOWN(TOWN)

Become one of the easiest downtowns to get to, and make downtown enjoyable, safe, and clear to navigate with or without a car.

Downtown still feels harder to get to and move through than it needs to. Successfully attracting more residents, employees, and visitors will make reliance on driving as the main way to get to and through Downtown even more challenging. That came through clearly in discussions around driving, parking, walking, biking, transit, accessibility, and wayfinding. Madison already has strong building blocks to work with, including BRT, a strong bike culture, and a compact Downtown. **The goal is a Downtown that is less dependent on any one way of getting around and that feels easier, calmer, safer, and more enjoyable to travel to and around.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

- Increase transit, walking, and biking for trips to Downtown.
- Increase transit, walking, biking, and micromobility for trips within Downtown.
- Improve ease and comfort for people moving between key Downtown destinations.
- Achieve “better than ADA” accessibility for public spaces.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Better wayfinding, park-once options, and easier connections between all parts of Downtown.
- Stronger transit service within Downtown, especially for evenings, weekends, and major events
- Safer and clearer walking, biking, and micromobility connections.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Boulder, CO pedestrian streets; Chattanooga, TN electric shuttle; Vancouver, BC water taxi; Providence, RI waterfront trail linking destinations

THE BIG MOVES

CURATE UNFORGETTABLE DISTRICTS

Cultivate and promote several thriving districts within the Greater Downtown that are memorable, walkable, and well-connected.

Right now, Downtown can feel like one large area rather than a collection of unique visitor destination districts with their own identity and sense of place. At the same time, Madison already has the raw material for stronger districts, including State Street, the Square, the lakes, clusters of commercial activity, and other unique but emerging areas. And new development has the ability to move the dial for the better or for the worse. The goal is not to force a “brand” onto every block. **As Downtown grows, this is about celebrating unique cultures and offerings in Madison, complementing and serving neighborhoods, avoiding homogeneity, and making different parts of Downtown easier to understand, easier to navigate, and easier to remember.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

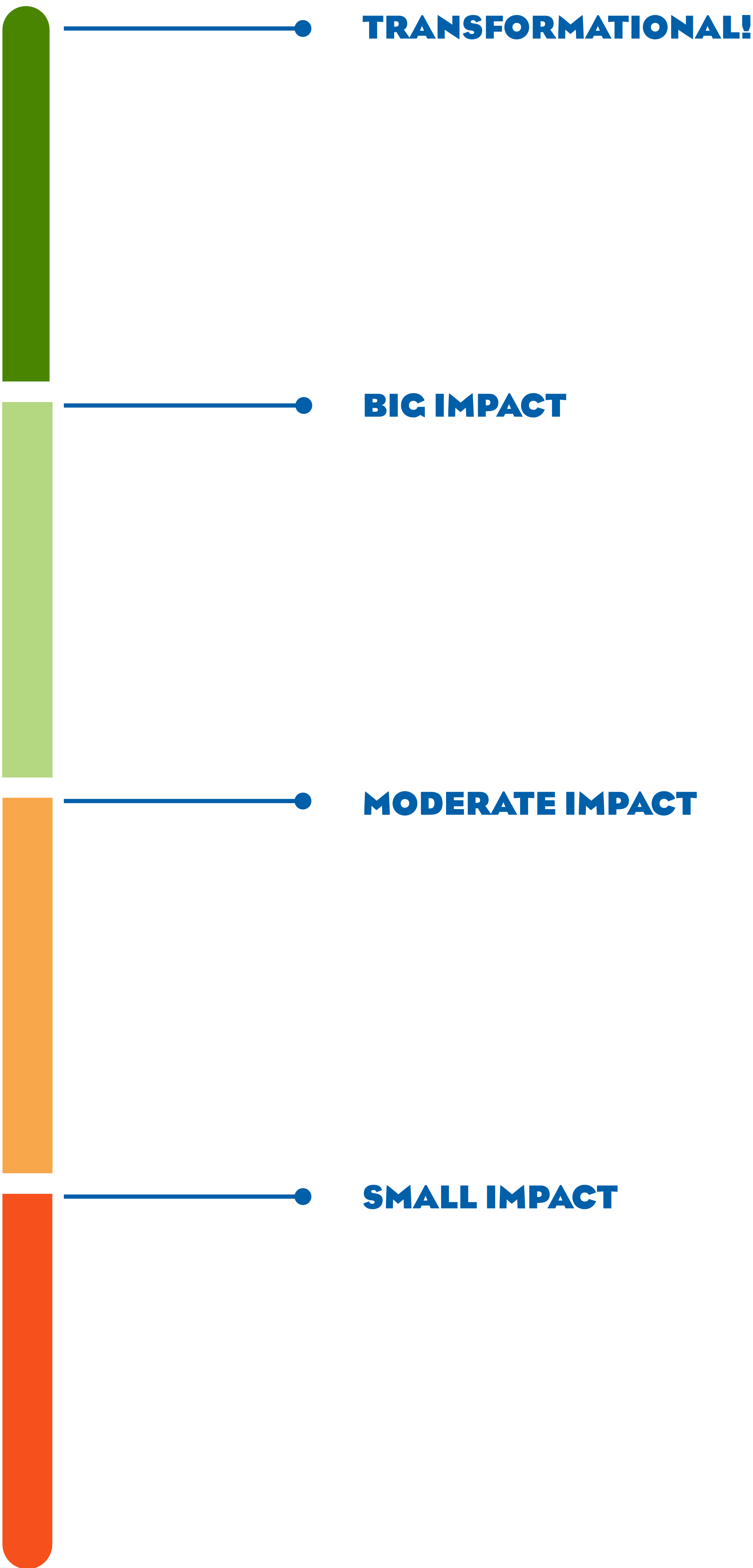
- Create a clearer set of Downtown districts with their own feel and purpose.
- Make districts feel “stickier” so people spend more time in an area strolling and visiting more destinations.
- Lengthen the time people spend Downtown and increase the number of districts visited per trip.
- Make Downtown easier to understand and remember.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

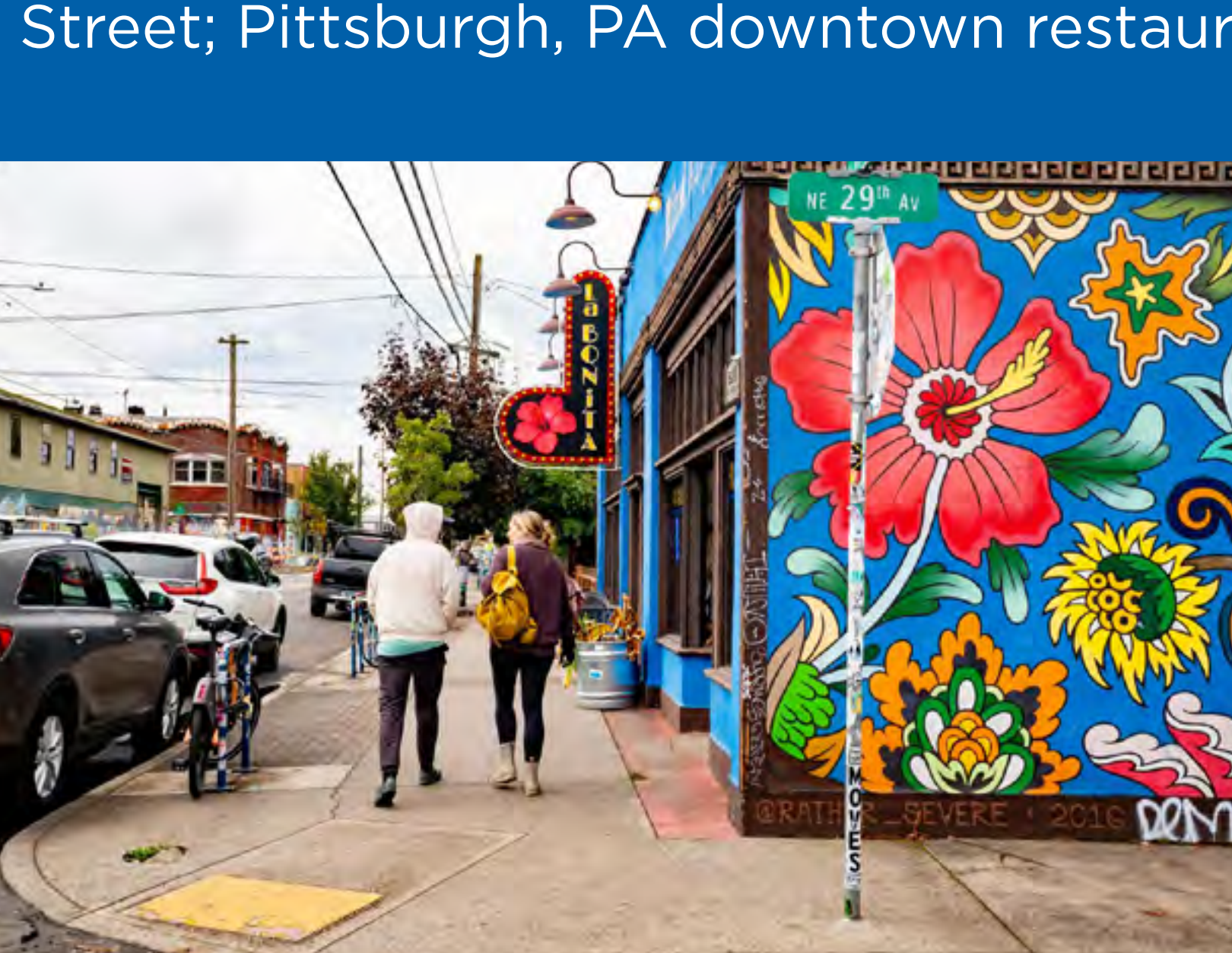
- District-specific signage, lighting, art, and branding improvements.
- Streetscape and public space upgrades that make each area feel more distinct.
- Programming and business mix strategies that reinforce local flavor and identity.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS in Action



L to R: Charleston, SC shopping on Kings Street; Pittsburgh, PA downtown restaurants; Portland, OR Mississippi Avenue; Pittsburgh, PA Strip District

THE BIG MOVES PUT THE “THERE” BACK IN STATE AND SQUARE

Make the ground floors along State Street and the Square reflections of the diverse, high quality offerings Madison and Wisconsin have to offer.

State Street and the Square, as Wisconsin’s capital, are still Downtown’s symbolic center and one of the community’s most important shared places. What happens here sends a message about Downtown as a whole. **As Wisconsin’s capital, these are signature public spaces with the largest collection of ground floor commercial spaces and the opportunity to offer more for a greater diversity of people.** With their locations between Downtown’s largest institutional anchors, high level of visibility, and importance to locals and visitors, this area can be Downtown’s most recognizable district and strongest amplifier of its energy, character, and investment.

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

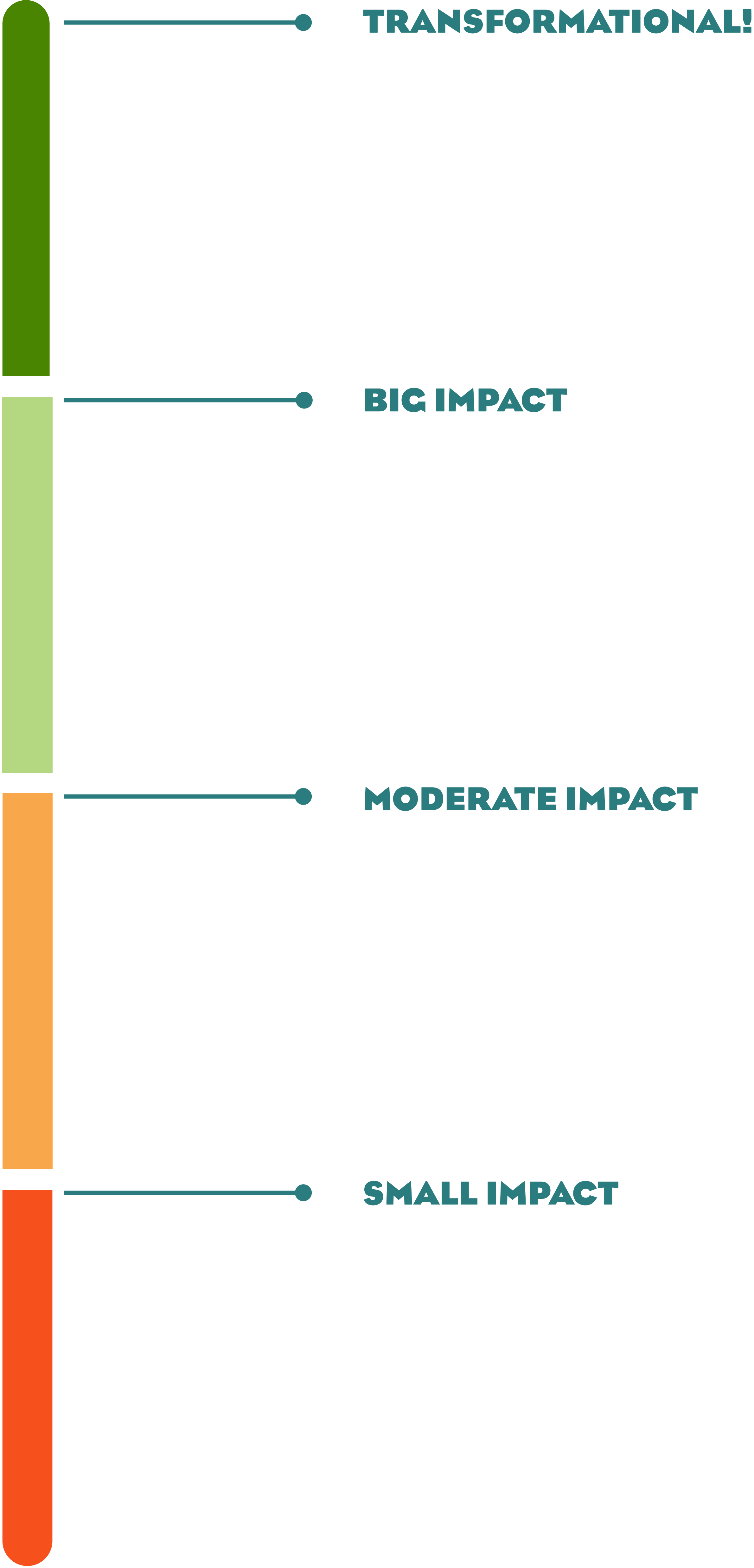
- Strengthen State Street and the Square as Downtown’s most recognizable and memorable district.
- Improve the mix of uses and the day-to-day experience to be more welcoming and more reflective of and attractive to all Madisonians.
- Make this area more active throughout the week and all seasons.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Ground-floor activation and support for a stronger mix of tenants and uses, including retail to better balance with food and beverage offerings.
- Public realm improvements that make the corridor and square more inviting, better for events, and more flexible for a variety of formal and informal programming.
- A clearer plan for how this area connects the University, the Square, and nearby districts

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Boulder, CO Pearl Street Pedestrian Mall; Charleston, SC Kings Street; Indianapolis, IN Massachusetts Avenue; Indianapolis, IN Massachusetts Avenue

THE BIG MOVES REIMAGINE PEOPLE SPACES AND PLACES

Expand and rethink the delivery, ownership, programming, and operations of public spaces and who they serve.

Downtown needs more places where people want to stay, not just pass through. Madison already has a strong foundation of parks, streets, gathering places, and public destinations, but there is a growing number of residents, workers, and visitors asking for more safety, more comfort, more variety, and more low-cost things to do. With constraints on the amount of traditional park land that can be added, **Downtown will need to be more creative in using streets, street ends, parking, plazas, balconies, rooftops, and the lakes to create more places and spaces that are safe, attractive, and accessible to the public.** The goal is a Downtown that feels useful and welcoming to a more diverse audience in everyday life, not only for a select few and not only during special events.

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

- Create more places where people want to stay, gather, and return.
- Expand low-cost and free things to do Downtown.
- Increase the number of indoor and outdoor spaces available to the public for free.
- Make Downtown more comfortable for everyday use, not just special events.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- New or improved plazas, play spaces, seating areas, and year-round gathering places—both in the public realm and as part of new development/redevelopment.
- Reuse of select leasable ground-floor spaces for community-serving or experience-based uses.
- Creation of a program promoting privately-owned public spaces that incentivizes, coordinates, and promotes these spaces.
- Improvements to existing public space that support a greater diversity of residents, longer visits, and more daily activity.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: San Francisco, CA “Privately Owned Public Open Spaces”; New York, NY “Privately Owned Public Spaces”; San Francisco, CA parklet; Asheville, NC Pack Square Park

THE BIG MOVES

FEEL THE LAKE EFFECT

Leverage the lakes and lakefronts for access, activation, recreation, and connectivity.

Madison is one of just two U.S. cities with a downtown located on an isthmus, and the fact that downtown is surrounded by lakes is one of Madison’s biggest advantages. However, the lakes do not always feel as central and connected to Downtown as they could. There are already several signature community events that celebrate the lakes, and a strong interest in recreation, views, trails, and improving the overall waterfront experience. With that said, there is a big difference between being a city on a lake and being a celebrated waterfront community. **The goal is to make the lakes feel more integral to daily life Downtown, more important to how people experience the city, and a stronger complement to other destinations in Greater Downtown.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

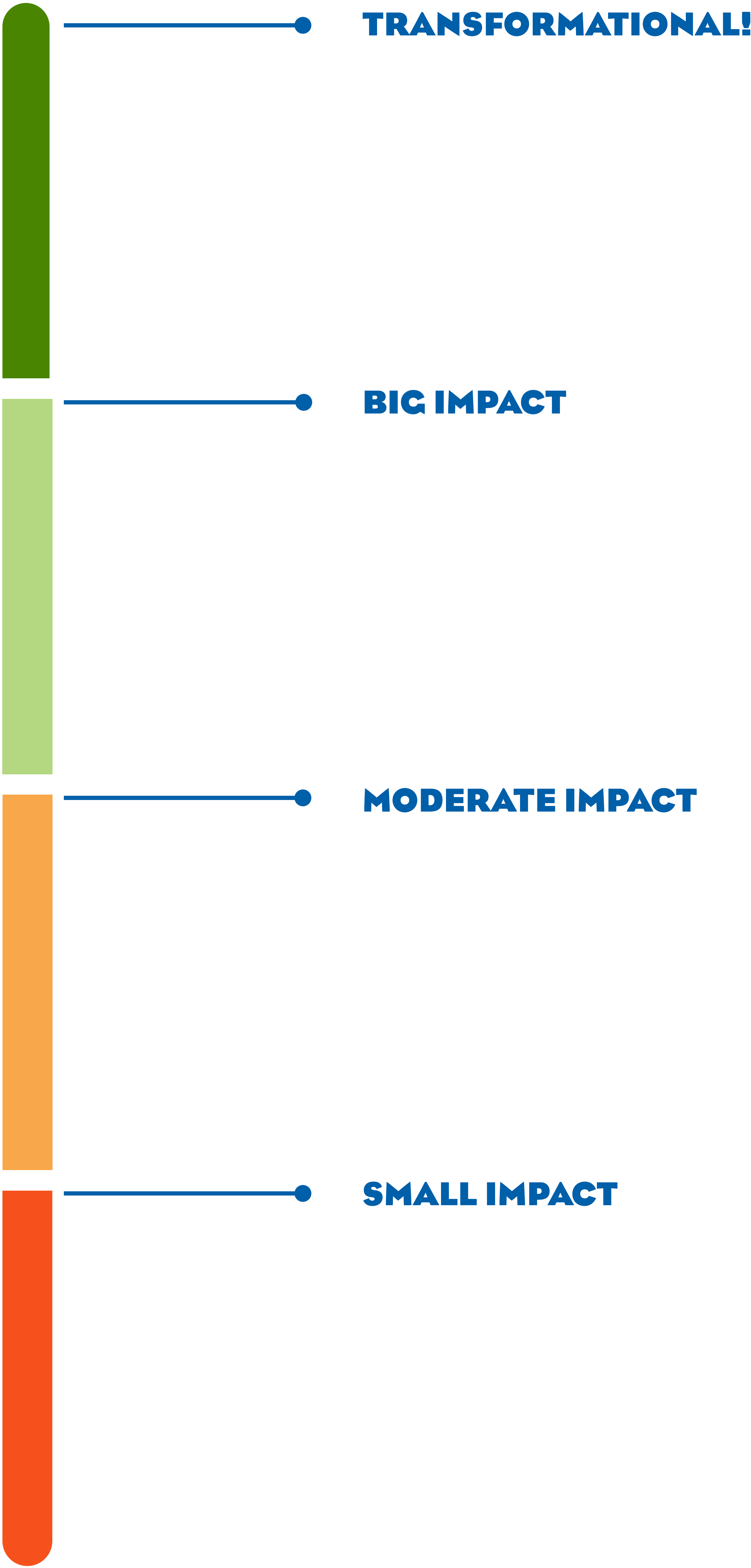
- Better connect Downtown to the lakes and waterfront experience.
- Expand year-round recreation and activity on and near the water.
- Make the lakes feel more central to Downtown life.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

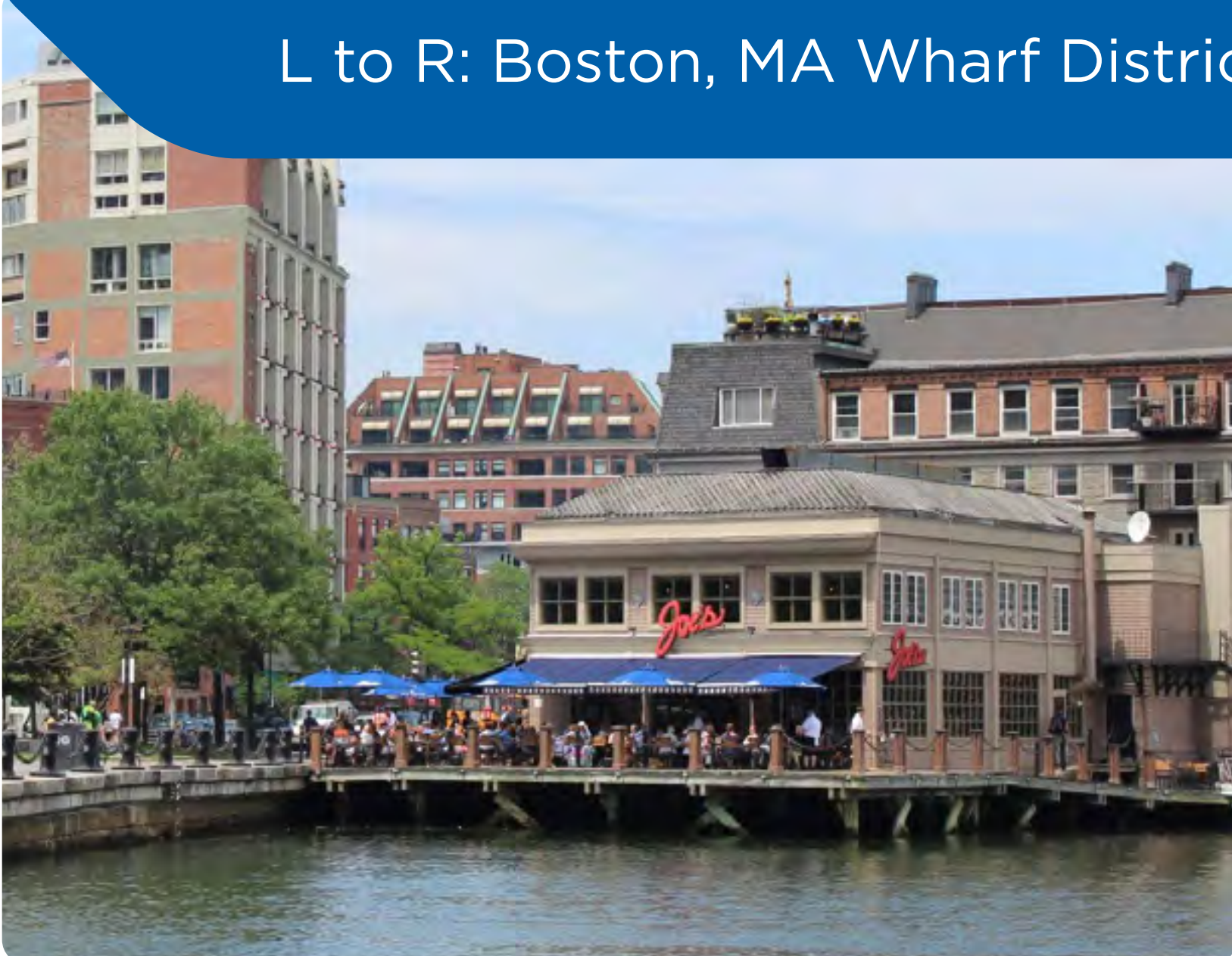
- Better pedestrian and bike connections to the waterfront.
- Full implementation of the Lakeway project.
- Public space and recreation improvements along the water.
- Increased education about water safety and the lakes
- New programming, amenities, and destinations tied to the lakefronts and the lakes themselves.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Boston, MA Wharf District Parks; Boston, MA Haborwalk; Tampa, FL Riverwalk; Seattle, WA Overlook Walk

THE BIG MOVES DRIVE THE NEXT GEN ECONOMY

Attract investment and growth in existing economic anchors, growing business sectors, and new jobs and businesses.

Downtown has a role to play in the future of Madison’s next economy, especially because of its ties to UW, homegrown businesses, and the city’s broader innovation base. Recent shifts toward hybrid and remote work, along with government job relocations and changing space needs, have created near-term challenges for Downtown’s traditional employment base. At the same time, the strongest future demand may look different from older office patterns, with more need for flexible space, collaboration, and stronger links between talent and business growth. **Downtown can serve as a central gathering hub and support center for the larger regional economy.** Discussions also highlight opportunities for downtown businesses to better attract, serve, and reflect the increasingly diverse local and regional population. The goal is to make Downtown a visible and useful part of Madison’s innovation ecosystem.

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

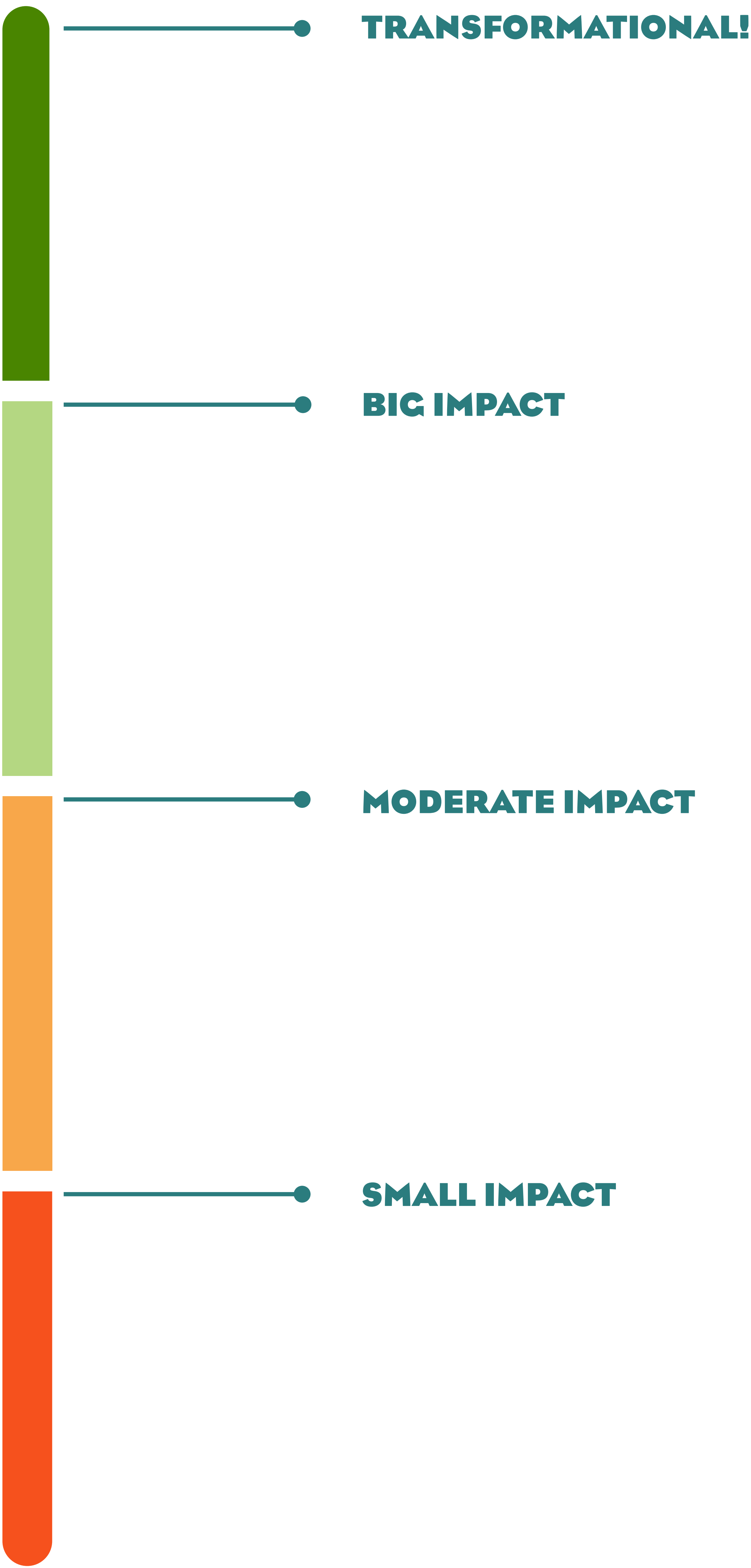
- Strengthen Downtown’s role in Madison’s innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- Create more space and support for growing firms, talent, and new ideas.
- Better connect Downtown to lifelong education and university-driven innovation.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Flexible spaces for startups, research partnerships, and innovation activity.
- Programs or partnerships that connect students, founders, and employers.
- Mixed-use development that ensures space for jobs and businesses alongside more housing.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Nashville, TN Entrepreneur Center; Austin, TX Downtown Innovation District by University of Texas; Pittsburgh, PA Carnegie Mellon University Robotics Innovation Center; Pittsburgh, PA Bakery Square mixed-use district

THE BIG MOVES MAKE DOWNTOWN A DIVERSE AND COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD

Deliver more housing for more people and support housing choices with amenities that serve daily needs.

Downtown housing needs to work for a wider range of people than it does today. With the largest number of housing units being apartments and detached homes with a heavy emphasis on serving students, there are opportunities to attract and serve a more diverse downtown residential base. Discussions have pointed to gaps in single-family attached products, family-sized housing, ownership options, attainable and workforce housing, supportive housing, and other housing supporting older adults, as well as the amenities and services to support a livable downtown. Madison already has strong housing demand and continued population growth to build on. **The goal is a Downtown with more people, more housing choices, and more resident-serving retail and amenities for a broader mix of households.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

- Add more housing choices for a wider range of people and households.
- Support a more mixed-income, mixed-age, and mixed ownership Downtown.
- Increase housing types that are limited today, including family-sized and ownership options.
- Increase access to daily goods and services.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Incentives for mixed-income and workforce housing.
- Support for a broader mix of housing types and unit sizes.
- Housing tied to walkable areas, transit, and everyday amenities.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Boston, MA triple-decker homes; Jersey City, NJ Journal Square transit-oriented development; San Diego, CA East Village District housing; San Diego, CA townhomes in Little Italy

THE BIG MOVES

ELEVATE THE ARTS, CULTURE, AND ENTERTAINMENT SCENE

Establish a sustainable roadmap and set of tools for better connecting, activating, funding, and promoting Madison’s great existing events, venues, and cultural and historic resources.

Arts, culture, and entertainment are already one of the strongest advantages of Madison’s Greater Downtown. The issue is not whether this matters, but how to build on it in a way that results in a sustainable ongoing funding and organizational strategy, supports maintenance and reinvestment in existing events, venues, and cultural and historic resources. **Better showcasing the existing arts, culture, and entertainment scene and better wrapping it into the urban fabric of Downtown** can create even more activity, more variety, and more reasons to come Downtown beyond just food and drink.

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

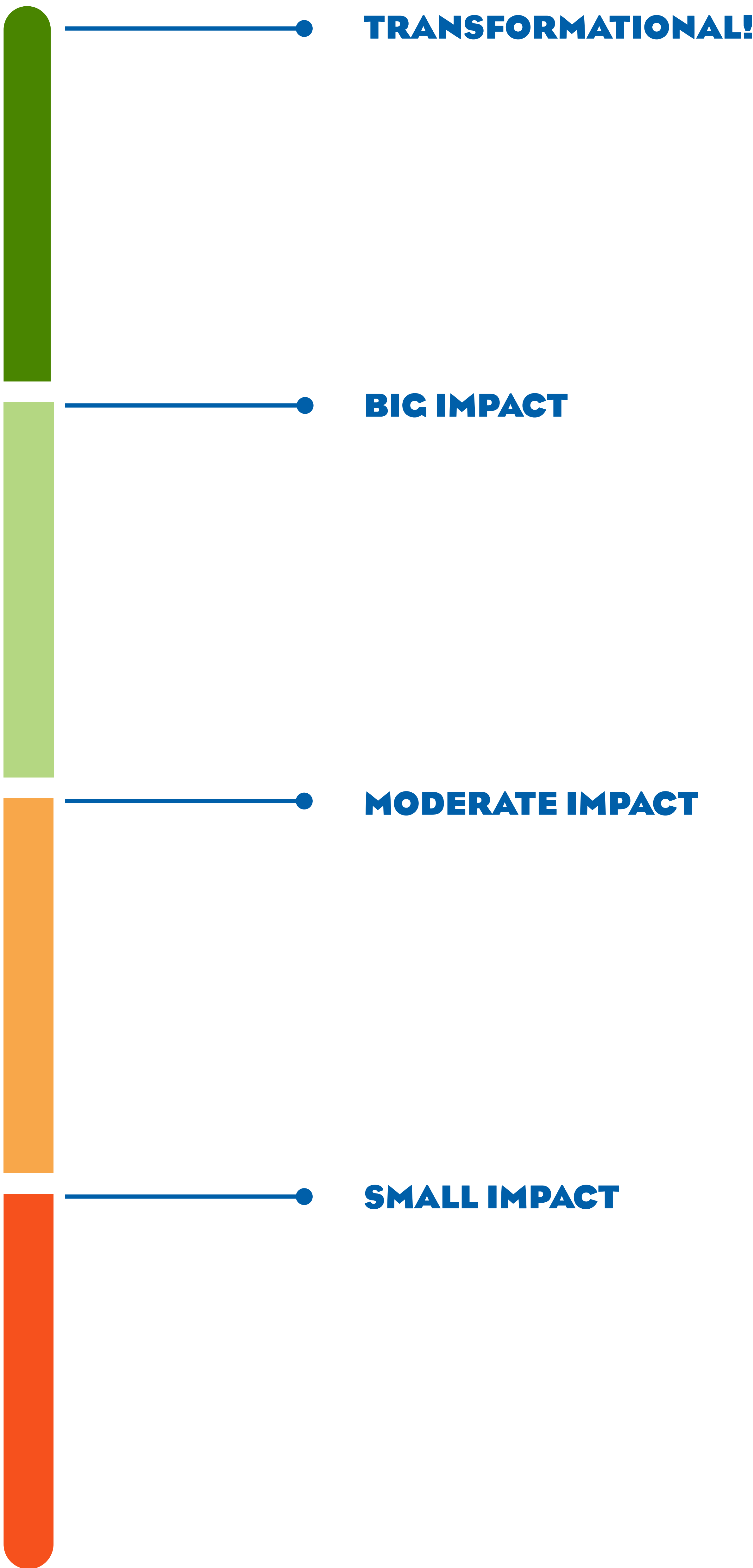
- Build on Downtown’s role as a major arts, culture, and events destination.
- Expand activity throughout the year.
- Increase number and diversity of people attending events Downtown.
- Integrate more visible and recognizable placemaking with activation through public art, the arts, and entertainment.
- Give people more reasons to come Downtown beyond food and drink.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Better coordination across venues and destinations.
- Exploration of a dedicated funding stream to reinvest in existing events and venues.
- Support for cultural programming, public art, and events.
- Space and support for artists, makers, and creative activity.
- Improved coordination and support around larger events that draw visitors.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Pittsburgh, PA Cultural Trust programming; Columbus, OH Short North Arts District; Knoxville, TN downtown events; Columbus, OH gallery hop

THE BIG MOVES BECOME THE HEALTHIEST AND GREENEST DOWNTOWN

Promote and support community and environmental health with green infrastructure, development, and recreation.

As Greater Downtown grows, people want it to feel cleaner, greener, and easier to use. Madison already has a strong culture of health, a strong environmental ethic, and a strong bike and outdoor recreation culture to build on. Achieving this vision will require investments in greener infrastructure and everyday mobility, including expanded tree canopy, green stormwater features, and safer, better-connected pedestrian and bike networks that make it easier to access Downtown and move between its existing destinations, neighborhoods, parks, and waterfront assets. **The goal is a Downtown that feels healthier, more resilient, and more pleasant in everyday life.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

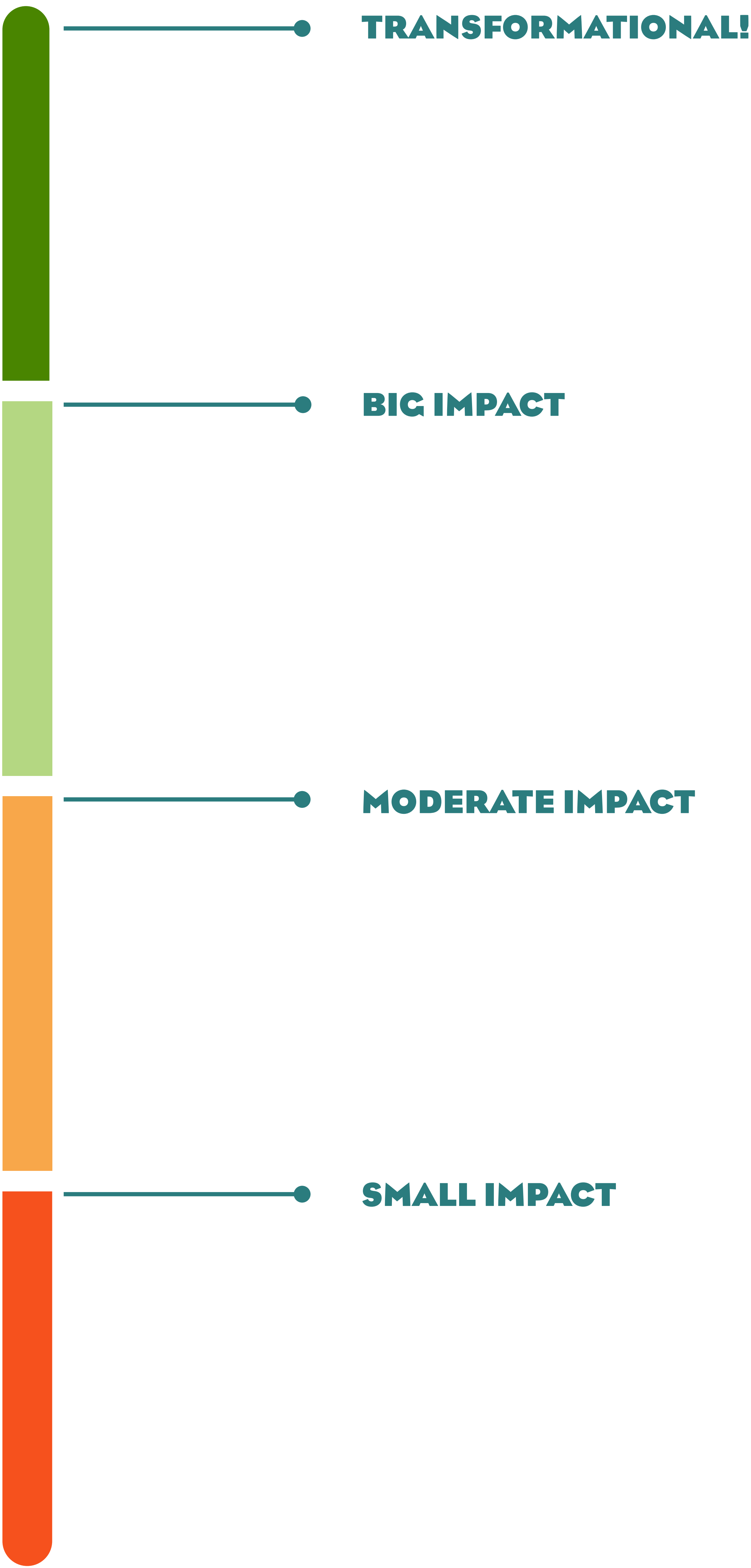
- Make Downtown easier to use, more sustainable, and more resilient.
- Improve everyday cleanliness, comfort, and the public realm.
- Reduce the environmental impact of future growth.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Greener streets (e.g., green stormwater features), more shade (e.g., increased tree canopy), and more climate-responsive features.
- Cleaner, safer, and better-maintained public spaces.
- Better integration of recreational opportunities in Downtown and Greater Downtown.
- Sustainability features tied to new development and infrastructure upgrades.

HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Portland, OR South Park Blocks; Washington D.C. bioswales; Portland, OR green streets; Austin, TX Lady Bird Lake waterfront

THE BIG MOVES INFUSE LEARNING, PLAY, AND DISCOVERY

**Reshape one or more districts
in Downtown as a can't miss
destination for kids and families.**

The Greater Downtown needs to work better for families if it wants to draw more local and regional users over time. Madison already has strong family-oriented assets and destinations, but those largely are housed in individual venues and a handful of events. Children and families represent a largely untapped market for Downtown. Discussions have suggested there are not enough family-friendly and multi-generational amenities and offerings spread across Downtown, ranging from restaurants, shops, art, and public spaces. **The goal is not to make this the only story, but to make sure families of all shapes and sizes are better served across many parts of Downtown.**

ILLUSTRATIVE TARGETS

- Make one or more Downtown districts more welcoming and useful for families.
- Increase family-oriented visits and activities.
- Better connect students with the business community.
- Build more reasons for local households to come Downtown regularly.

ILLUSTRATIVE PUBLIC AND/OR PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

- Family-friendly public spaces, restrooms, seating, art, and play features.
- More low-cost family programming and events.
- Family-friendly interpretive signage and other storytelling elements.
- Better family-oriented amenities across one or more districts and destinations.

**HOW BIG OF AN IMPACT DO YOU
THINK THIS WOULD MAKE IN
THE NEXT 10 YEARS?**

Place a sticker dot along the scale below to tell us how you think this Big Move will impact Downtown.



IDEAS IN ACTION



L to R: Vancouver, BC play area in Science World; Halifax, NS waterfront park; Boulder, CO Pearl Street Pedestrian Mall play area; Halifax, NS waterfront hammocks

THE BIG MOVES

VOTE FOR YOUR TOP BIG MOVE



Now that you’ve learned about each Big Move, which one are you most excited about?



Place one dot next to the Big Move below that you are most excited about.

1) Come on Down(town): Become one of the easiest downtowns to get to, and make downtown enjoyable, safe, and clear to navigate with or without a car.	6) Drive the Next Gen Economy: Attract investment and growth in existing economic anchors, growing business sectors, and new jobs and businesses.
2) Curate Unforgettable Districts: Cultivate and promote several thriving districts within the Greater Downtown that are memorable, walkable, and well-connected.	7) Make Downtown a Diverse and Complete Neighborhood: Deliver more housing for more people and support housing choices with amenities that serve daily needs.
3) Put the “There” Back in State and Square: Make the ground floors along State Street and the Square reflections of the diverse, high quality offerings Madison and Wisconsin have to offer.	8) Elevate the Arts, Culture, & Entertainment Scene: Establish a sustainable roadmap and set of tools for better connecting, activating, funding, and promoting Madison’s great existing events, venues, and cultural and historic resources.
4) Reimagine People Spaces and Places: Expand and rethink the delivery, ownership, programming, and operations of public spaces and who they serve.	9) Become the Healthiest and Greenest Downtown: Promote and support community and environmental health with green infrastructure, development, and recreation.
5) Feel the Lake Effect: Leverage the lakes and lakefronts for access, activation, recreation, and connectivity.	10) Infuse Learning, Play and Discovery: Reshape one or more districts in Downtown as a can’t miss destination for kids and families.