

Where We've Been and Where We're Going

Downtown Strategy Phases



What We Did Together in Phase 1:

Your input set **Growth Principles** and **Preliminary Goals** that we're testing tonight.

- 700** workshop attendees
- 450** online questionnaire responses
- 200** Palace Theatre tabling event visitors
- 80** participants across 12 focus groups
- 50** business drop in visits

	Growth Principles	Preliminary Goals (5-10 Years)
	Attract and retain residents	Double the number of people living in core of downtown
	Grow and diversify jobs	Grow the private-sector share of downtown jobs from \approx 33% today to \approx 45% in 5 years and \approx 55% in 10 years
	Create vibrancy & increase visitation	Host 10 million+ annual visits and 100+ event days downtown
	Attract private funding	Leverage \$3–\$4 in private investment for every public dollar
	Stop vacancy	Get 2-3 major downtown sites under construction within five years
	Ensure growth benefits all	Increase positive safety ratings by 15–20% and evening foot traffic by 25–30%

Downtown's Building Blocks

Together, three areas show how Downtown Albany's growth principles can come to life—from investment in the core to connections and livability in surrounding neighborhoods

The Core



Downtown's engine of growth—where new housing, jobs, and culture take root. This is where major **residential buildings, street life, and investment** set the pace for the rest of the city.

Downtown Gateways

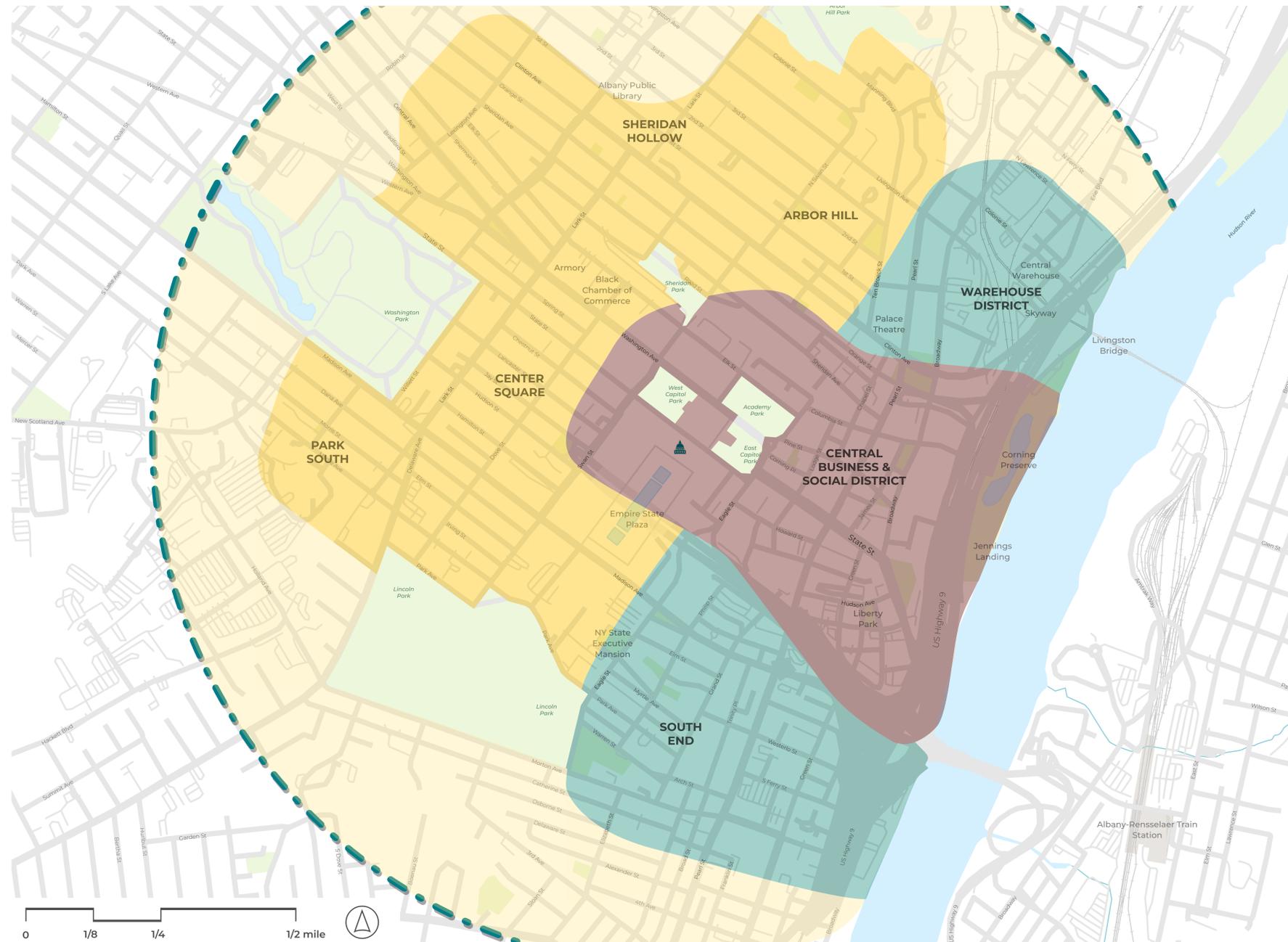


Where Downtown's energy expands into gateways that **connect** the core, neighborhoods, and waterfront. These areas **mix and concentrate jobs, housing, and culture** so more people share in Downtown's growth.

Neighborhood Anchors



The neighborhoods that make Downtown **livable**—with new housing, safer streets, and everyday destinations. Anchors **extend the benefits of growth**—affordable homes, small businesses, and culture—into surrounding communities.



Where We're Concentrating

A dynamic Downtown, shaped by connected neighborhoods and experiences that celebrate Albany's assets, support those who are here, and welcome new growth

International District

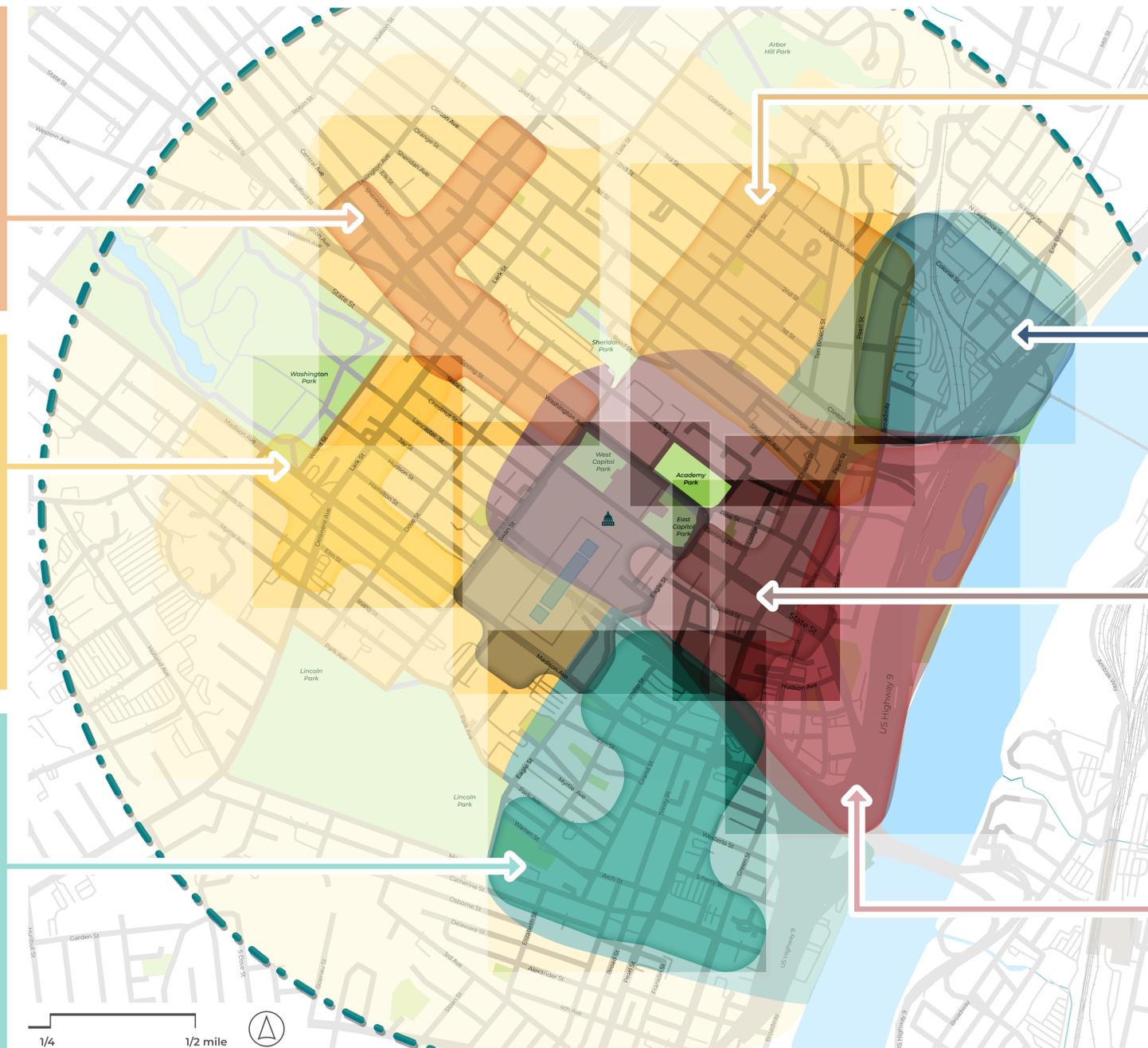
A multicultural destination celebrating Albany's global businesses—with walkable streets, welcoming public spaces, and new housing opportunities.

Albany's Neighborhood Village

Lark Street strengthened as Albany's primary **village corridor**—linking parks, civic life, and local shops in a walkable, welcoming corridor.

South End Gateway

A residential and institutional **southern** gateway connecting across former barriers—where diverse housing options, local institutions, and heritage destinations benefit longtime and new residents.



Clinton Square Arts & Heritage District

A historic neighborhood reconnected to Downtown's core through **culture, heritage, new housing, and year-round activity.**

Warehouse District Gateway

Where **industry meets creativity**—a growing waterfront gateway that **extends Downtown north**, connecting the core to a wealth of new living, jobs, entertainment, and recreation opportunities.

Albany's Downtown Heart

State and Pearl Streets reborn as the Capital Region's premier living, dining, and shopping destination—a true **24/7 social district and city center.**

Albany's New Downtown Neighborhood

A new **mixed-use neighborhood** for jobs, housing, and culture—anchored by Liberty Park, Broadway's historic buildings, signature public spaces, and connections to the waterfront.

Tools We Can Apply Strategically Across Downtown

These approaches are designed to bring together public, private, and community partners to advance Downtown's growth and make the most of shared resources



Conversion Toolkit



Supports turning vacant or outdated office space into upgraded workspace or housing.

Example: Provide grants and/or technical help to convert an underused office into mixed-income apartments and active ground floor uses.



Small Business Toolkit



Expands small business capacity to refresh storefronts and draw more visitors downtown.

Example: Fund outdoor seating, new signage, or pop-up weekend events to boost visibility.



Cultural Programming Support*



Helps partners activate public spaces with cultural events and year-round programming.

Example: Partner with arts and community groups to coordinate recurring performances or markets.



Emerging Developer Fund



Provides assistance to local and emerging builders creating small-scale (2–10 unit) housing.

Example: Offer site preparation support and/or grants for infill housing on vacant lots.



Housing Toolkit



Aligns funding, regulations, and processes to unlock new housing projects and meet affordability goals.

Example: Bundle incentives and approvals to accelerate a mixed-income development.



Local Nonprofit Capacity Support*



Builds the capacity of nonprofits expanding workforce and community-based programs.

Example: Fund staff training or technical assistance for local service providers.

*Cultural Programming Support and Local Nonprofit Capacity Support would be partner-led initiatives, not funded directly by the CAP program.

THE CORE

Albany's Downtown Heart: State & Pearl Streets

Why: State & Pearl form the Core's primary commercial arteries with historic character and room for residential growth

	Needs	Community Assets
	Very few residents today — about ≈850 people live in the core; ≈75% of buildings have no apartments	Conversion momentum — interest and market is growing for mixed-use and residential use
	Heavy daytime skew — ≈86% of jobs are office/government; workers rarely stay after 6 pm	Pearl's restaurant and bar cluster — a ready base for after-hours dining and nightlife
	Event spikes — calendar relies on a few big draws; limited nightly options Sun–Thu	Established events (Alive at Five, Empire Live) prove demand and provide foundation for more regular activity
	High retail vacancy — ≈35% of storefronts show vacancy or low visibility due to “papered” windows	Civic anchors — arena/convention/ theaters, can create a strong event-to-evening loop and support foot traffic
	Vacancies suppress reuse — e.g., some owners hold buildings empty to preserve values	Big floorplates and historic buildings — suitable for conversion, ground-floor activation, and upper-story use
	Weak street-level experience — poor lighting, transparency, and seating reduce comfort and safety after dark	Walkable blocks & alleys — good bones for lighting, patios, and uses that animate the core



THE CORE

Albany's Downtown Heart: State & Pearl Streets

Vision: State and Pearl Streets reborn as the Capital Region's premier living, dining, and shopping destination—a true 24/7 social district and city center

Bundle 1 – State Street: Housing on the High Street

Outcome: The State's and Region's model living corridor.

How:

- 1a Convert office buildings for mixed-use housing and Class A office tenants.
- 1b Activate ground floors with retail or food.
- 1c Explore redesign of State Street to make it safer, greener, and more inviting for pedestrians.

Tools:



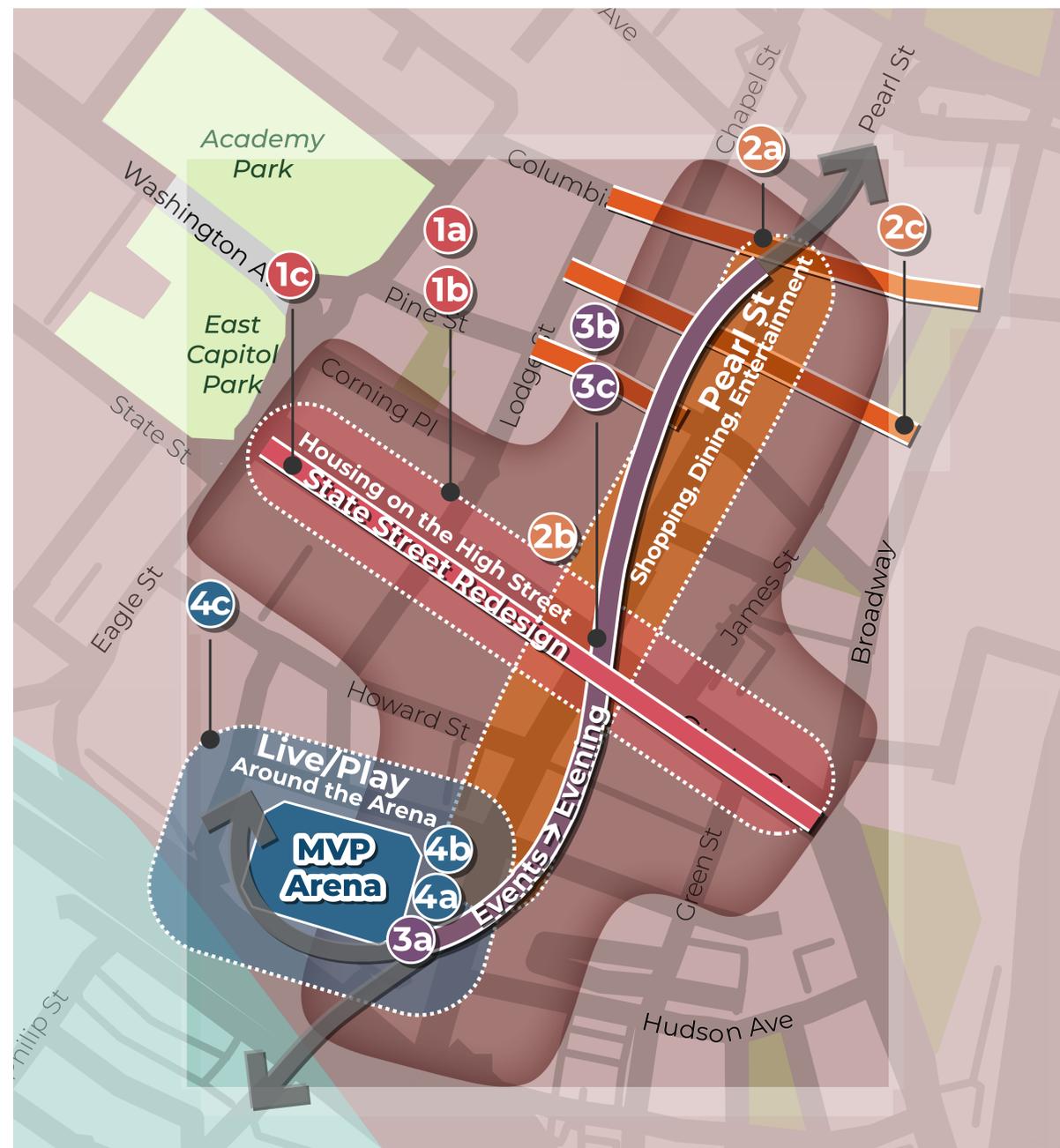
Bundle 2 – Pearl Street: Shopping, Dining, Entertainment

Outcome: A regional dining and nightlife corridor.

How:

- 2a Improve storefronts (signage, lighting, patios).
- 2b Redesign Ten Eyck Plaza and activate 40 N. Pearl vacant spaces.
- 2c Activate Steuben Street as a pedestrian spine.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Events → Evenings Loop

Outcome: A steady event rhythm that feeds downtown business.

How:

- 3a Align arena/convention events with pre- and post-activities.
- 3b Improve wayfinding from venues to Pearl.
- 3c Extend hours and offers on event nights.

Tools:



Bundle 4 – Live / Play Around the Arena

Outcome: Mixed-use energy at the south edge.

How:

- 4a Prepare public sites for mixed-income housing or hotel use.
- 4b Create raised event terrace between MVP Arena and Pearl.
- 4c Support year-round small-biz and events.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



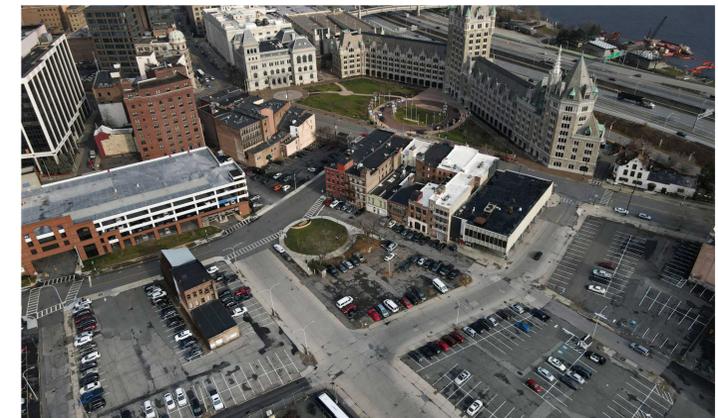
Empire State Development

THE CORE

Albany's New Downtown Neighborhood

Why: Liberty Park & Broadway offer a unique redevelopment opportunity— to establish a new downtown waterfront neighborhood in the heart of Albany

	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	Very few homes today — only ≈50 units along Broadway/Liberty Park; many upper floors remain vacant / underused	Historic buildings on Broadway — large floorplates and adaptable structures well-suited for mixed-use reuse
	Limited private-sector presence — ≈60% of nearby jobs are public-sector (higher-ed admin and government)	Emerging innovation foothold — business activity and flexible spaces could support university- and private-sector-linked entrepreneurship
	Events don't translate to evenings — arena/convention draws are episodic; weak links to area	Active and diverse event venues — proven audience to sequence into downtown activity
	Multiple owners and public processes slow site readiness	Multiple funding and tools — programs available for environmental cleanup, utilities, and infrastructure
	Too many surface lots & underused public spaces — blocks act as barriers rather than gathering places	Momentum for redevelopment — private interest position Broadway for a coordinated “next wave” of mixed-use projects
	Unsafe/indirect walking routes — wide roads, blank edges, few pedestrian amenities limit access and connectivity	Waterfront adjacency — short walking distance, access points create strong opportunity for lighting, signage, and programming



THE CORE

Albany's New Downtown Neighborhood

Vision: A new mixed-use neighborhood for jobs, housing, and culture – anchored by Liberty Park, Broadway's historic buildings, activated public spaces, and connections to the waterfront



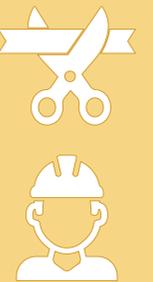
Bundle 1 – Liberty Park: Seed a Mixed-Use Neighborhood

Outcome: New homes and everyday destinations around a catalytic public space.

How:

- 1a Ready sites with infrastructure and stormwater upgrades.
- 1b Advance mixed-income housing and local retail.
- 1c Design for South End and I-787 reconnections.

Tools:



Bundle 2 – Broadway Waterfront District

Outcome: A connected community anchored by a reimagined SUNY Plaza.

How:

- 2a Transform SUNY Plaza forecourt into downtown's next major public space.
- 2b Improve lighting, art, and signage at waterfront access points.
- 2c Coordinate Broadway and riverfront event programming.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Broadway Mixed-Use Hubs

Outcome: Historic Broadway buildings and parking garages become mixed-use anchors and “third places.”

How:

- 3a Advance reuse of key sites and storefronts.
- 3b Activate lobbies and forecourts with seating, cafés, and events.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook

DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

Warehouse District Gateway

Why: Planned redevelopment of Central Warehouse creates potential for broader mixed-use district growth

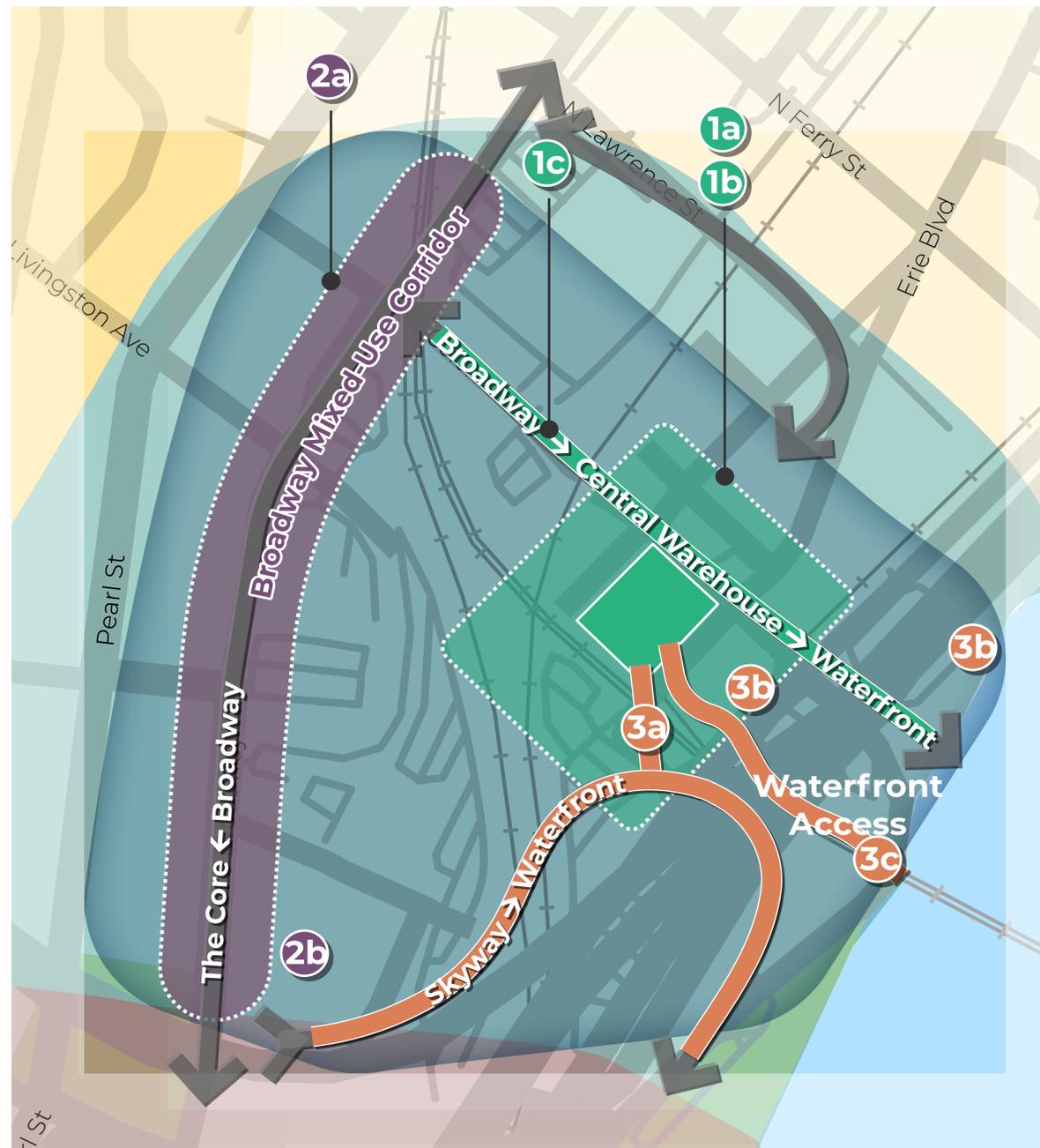
	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	Limited housing opportunities — fewer than 200 residents and 100 units; no true residential community yet	Industrial buildings with strong conversion potential — large floorplates, character suited for lofts or adaptive reuse
	Few daily jobs and employers — roughly 500–600 workers across <50 firms ; limited daytime presence	A growing cluster of higher-wage — legal, finance, and creative offices offer foundation for employment growth
	Not enough destinations — sporadic events and weak draw north of the downtown core on weeknights	Entertainment anchors — breweries, parks, and small venues create pockets of activity to expand upon
	Underused and friction sites — brownfields and fragmented parcels slow investment	Central Warehouse redevelopment can be a catalyst for cleanup, infrastructure, and district identity
	Disconnected street grid — limited lighting, crossings, and greenery; riverfront feels distant	Central Warehouse demolition, mobility studies, opening near-term redevelopment opportunities to improve access and circulation
	Unwelcoming public realm and lack of connections — limited lighting, crossings, art, greenery; river feels far	Emerging restaurants and entertainment options are beginning to animate streets, drive more foot traffic and after-hours activity



DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

Warehouse District Gateway

Vision: Where industry meets creativity—a growing waterfront gateway that extends Downtown north, connecting the core to a wealth of new living, jobs, entertainment, and recreation opportunities



Bundle 1 – Central Warehouse Anchor

Outcome: A mixed-use landmark that defines the district.

How:

- 1a Complete site readiness and infrastructure upgrades.
- 1b Host design competition for mixed-use reuse.
- 1c Connect the site to Broadway and the river.

Tools:



Bundle 2 – Broadway Corridor

Outcome: A productive corridor with small businesses and mixed-use projects.

How:

- 2a Align reuse and infill with County's Broadway Multimodal Study.
- 2b Advance reuse and new development concepts for priority sites.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Waterfront Access & District Programming

Outcome: A walkable waterfront edge connected to the Core.

How:

- 3a Explore a Skyway extension linking the Warehouse District to the Core and riverfront.
- 3b Explore canal-inspired access and water feature to/from Central Warehouse site to waterfront and bridge.
- 3c Build recurring events and market opportunities between Central Warehouse and riverfront.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



Empire State Development

DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

South End Gateway

Why: South End's historic character can attract residents and visitors, punch through barriers, and generate / spread community benefits

	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	Limited housing options beyond 100% subsidized — ≈20% of residents are still cost-burdened	Lincoln Towers redevelopment can deliver new mixed-income housing and affordability levels
	Low job density (<0.5 jobs per resident) and median household income (≈\$42k)	Current training programs and local developer investments can help strengthen the area's employment and entrepreneurship base
	Few grocery and service options — many residents travel outside the neighborhood	Interest in an affordable grocery concept and small business activation , especially along S. Pearl
	Minimal private investment in commercial properties (no new builds in a decade); poor property condition (≈100 homes)	Albany County's active calls for proposals can catalyze redevelopment of public and underused sites
	Significant number of vacant lots (≈220+ parcels), mostly in residential areas and along S. Pearl	Low housing vacancy and active cultural groups create momentum for infill homes + a heritage/cultural hub
	High vacancy and weak pedestrian environment — poor lighting, few crossings, and inactive edges	Large and small green spaces and civic anchors offer a base for focused and strategic public realm improvements and programming



DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

South End Gateway

Vision: A residential and institutional southern gateway connecting across former barriers—where diverse housing options, local institutions, and heritage destinations benefit longtime and new residents

Bundle 1 – Public / Underused Sites & Lincoln Towers

Outcome: Clusters of new housing, homeownership, and services.

How:

- 1a Broaden income mix at Lincoln Towers and test ownership models.
- 1b Advance City- / County-controlled and other public / underused parcels for mixed-income housing with active ground floors.

Tools:



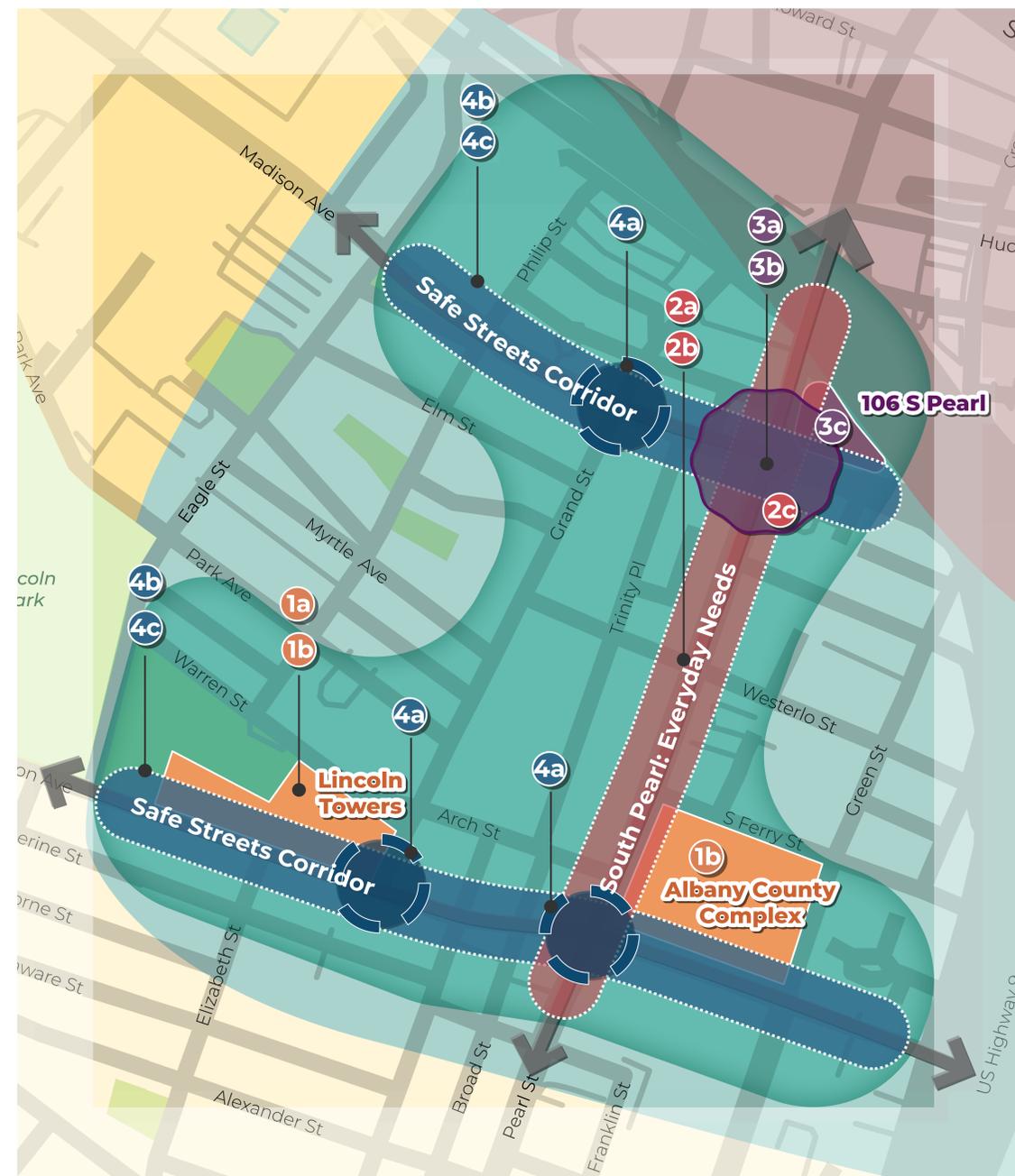
Bundle 4 – District Link: Safe Streets

Outcome: Walkable, well-lit corners and connections linking the South End to the Core, Lincoln Park, and Empire State Plaza.

How:

- 4a Target public safety initiatives at key nodes (e.g., Grand + Madison).
- 4b Target near-term fixes: lighting, crossings, traffic calming, bus stop amenities.
- 4c Brand the route with signage to cultural and housing nodes.

Tools:



Bundle 2 – South Pearl Everyday Needs

Outcome: A daily-needs hub for residents and workers.

How:

- 2a Explore urban-model grocery concepts.
- 2b Upgrade storefronts and activate weekend pop-ups.
- 2c Coordinate training and entrepreneurship support.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Culture & Community Node

Outcome: Year-round cultural anchors that lift identity and business.

How:

- 3a Support concentration of cultural and performance uses and development projects.
- 3b Add public realm upgrades (crosswalks, greenery, lighting).
- 3c Create new plaza at 106 S. Pearl as part of new development and cultural anchor node.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



Empire State Development

NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

International District

Why: Rich, multicultural assets on a primary corridor can provide desirable destinations & local economic benefits

	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	Lower household incomes — about ≈34% < \$15k; only ≈5% ≥ \$100k	Multicultural depth — ≈32% foreign-born, ≈75% non-white — a foundation for Albany's international identity
	High unemployment (≈25%) and reliance on service-sector jobs (>50%)	100+ independent businesses and cultural anchors form a strong local business base to grow from
	Parks and public spaces feel unsafe — limited lighting, programming, and maintenance	Townsend Park area upgrades are in the works — improved lighting, visibility, and event activity
	Low land values and aging building stock constrain reinvestment	Busiest downtown intersection (≈16.5k daily vehicles) creates visibility and potential for reinvestment
	High storefront churn (17+ vacancies); temporary retailers common	Relatively lower rents and institutional partners (UAlbany, nonprofits) can attract start-ups and expansions
	Hostile street experiences — 16k+ daily cars, few pedestrian conditions	Community-led events and merchant groups show strong capacity for local organizing



NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

International District

Vision: A multicultural destination celebrating Albany’s global businesses—with walkable streets, welcoming public spaces, and new housing opportunities

Bundle 1 – Safer, More Active Streets and Storefronts

Outcome: More welcoming corridors that support stronger local businesses.

How:

- 1a Deliver Townsend Park and key-block lighting upgrades.
- 1b Refresh storefronts (signage, lighting, transparency).
- 1c Add enhanced clean & safe operations (sanitation, maintenance) at busy nodes.
- 1d Recruit local entrepreneurs to reduce vacancy.

Tools:



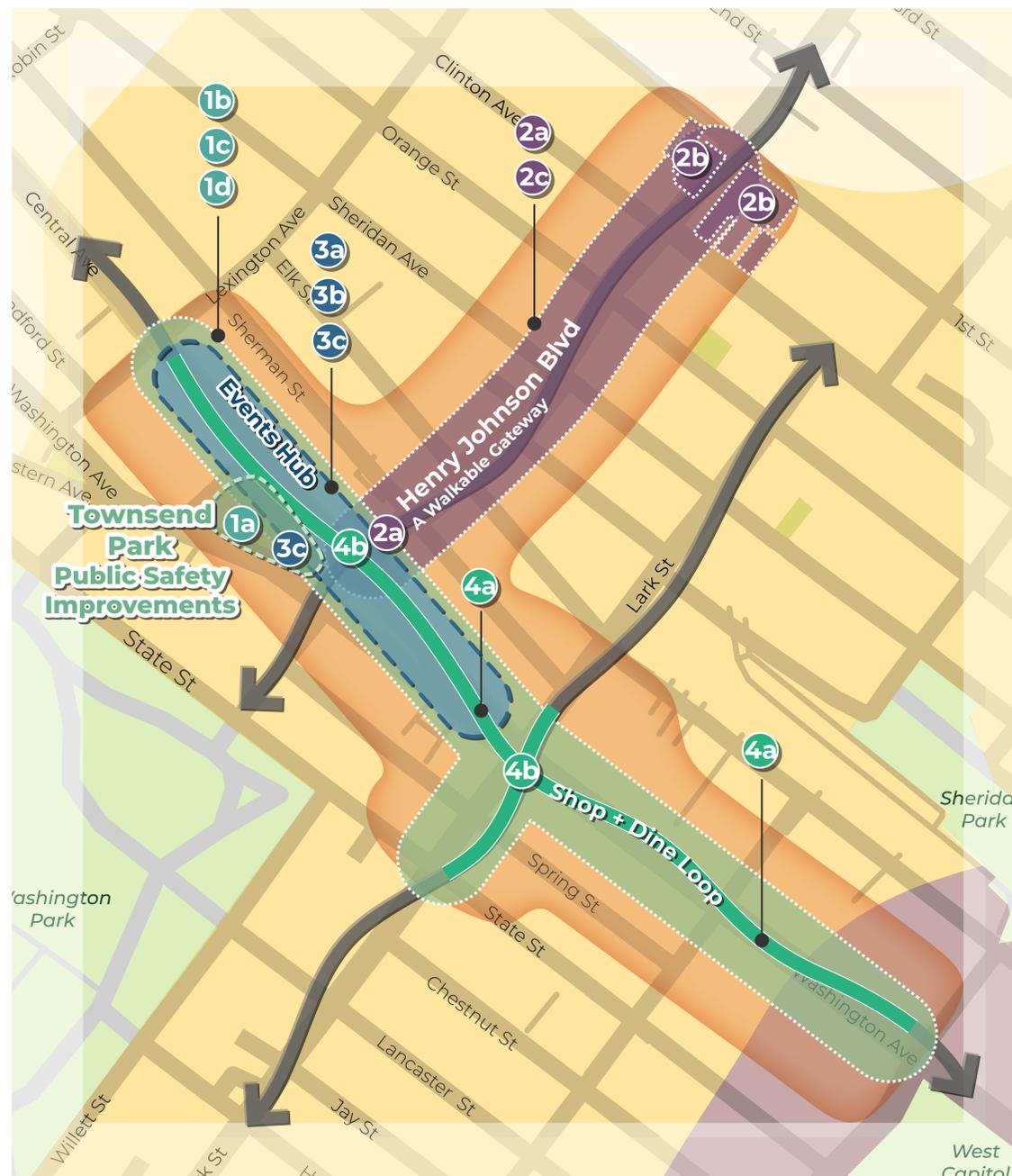
Bundle 4 – “Shop & Dine Loop”

Outcome: A branded route linking the International District with Lark and Downtown’s Core.

How:

- 4a Build corridor signage and wayfinding.
- 4b Add interpretive and cultural street art at major intersections.

Tools:



Bundle 2 – Henry Johnson Blvd: A Walkable Gateway

Outcome: A safe, welcoming entry corridor that supports new housing and local shops.

How:

- 2a Add traffic-calming, bike amenities, and bus stop upgrades.
- 2b Encourage mixed-income infill housing on opportunity sites.
- 2c Install gateway markers and signage to signal entry into Downtown.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Year-Round Cultural Calendar

Outcome: Regular events that spotlight food, culture, and small business.

How:

- 3a Launch recurring food + culture series (markets, open-street events).
- 3b Partner with local orgs to co-produce and market events.
- 3c Use plazas and improved parks as event spaces.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



Empire State Development

NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

Albany's Neighborhood Village

Why: Dense restaurant and retail offerings in a mixed-use neighborhood can connect experiences across downtown

	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	High housing costs — limited affordable options (> \$1,500/mo avg)	Highest population density downtown (≈25k / sq mi) with a livable, walkable feel
	Job concentration skew — ≈62% government, nonprofit, labor, or faith-based jobs	Diverse income mix (≈35% <\$50k; 35% \$50–\$100k; 30% ≥\$100k) supports retail strength
	Nearby attractions underused — not leveraged enough for steady foot traffic	≈90 restaurants/retail/recreation businesses create a strong base for events
	Aging storefronts — gaps in facades, signage, transparency	Recent mixed-use infill projects show ongoing reinvestment
	Vacant or inactive sites — 10+ storefronts, major vacancies possible (e.g., Methodist Church)	93% non-chain storefronts = strong local identity
	Safety & comfort gaps — crossings and lighting at key intersections	Active local businesses already using outdoor seating, art and small events



NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

Albany's Neighborhood Village

Vision: Lark Street strengthened as Albany's primary village corridor—linking parks, civic life, and local shops in a walkable, welcoming corridor

Bundle 1 – Public Realm & Small Business Upgrades

Outcome: Safer, more vibrant blocks with visible investment in small businesses.

How:

- 1a Redesign Lark & Madison (+ Lark & Central) for shorter crossings, better lighting, and trees.
- 1b Launch facade / signage / window upgrades with mini-grants + technical assistance.
- 1c Expand evening lighting + maintenance along key segments.

Tools:



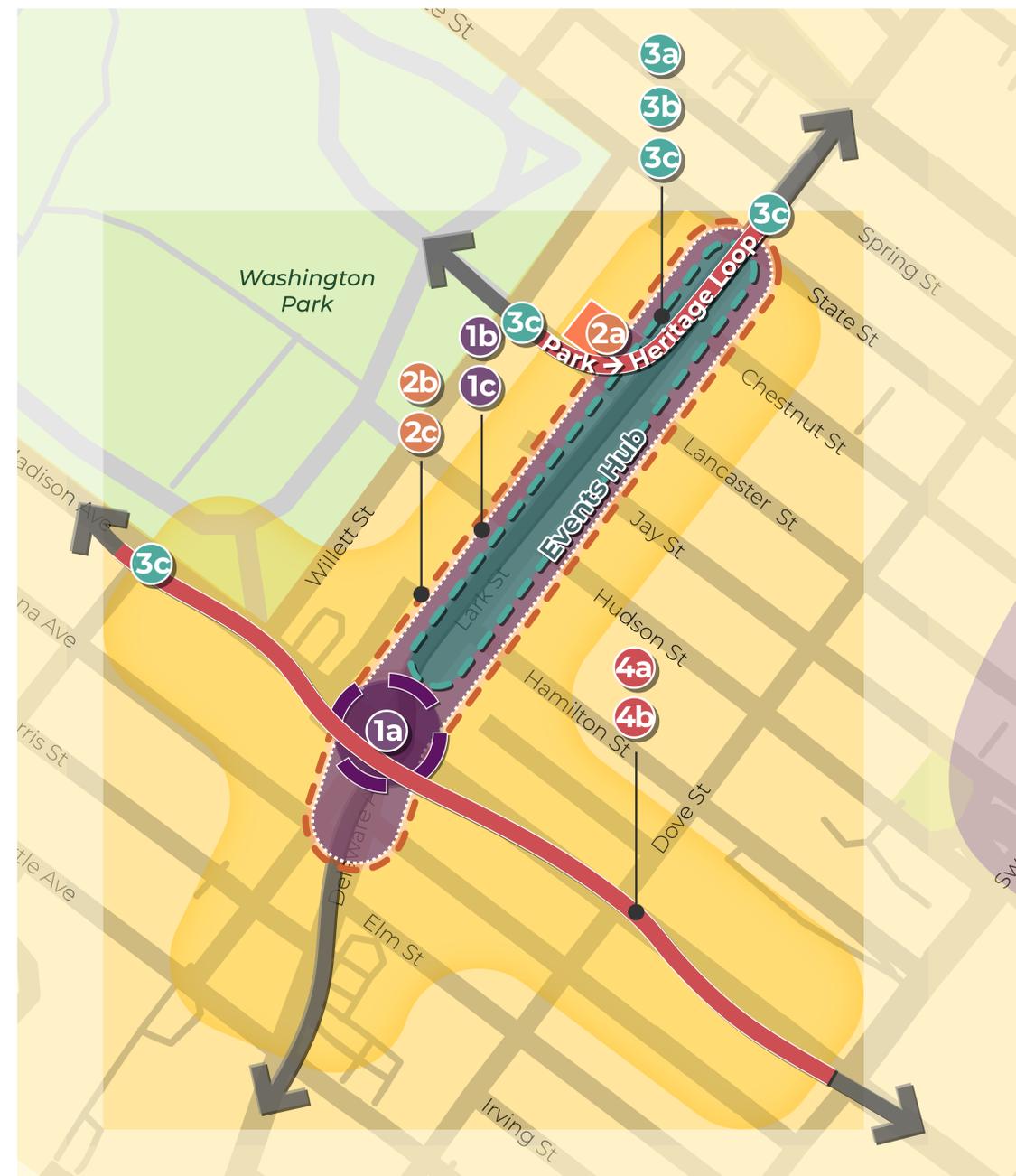
Bundle 4 – “Park-to-Heritage Loop”

Outcome: A signed, walkable route linking Washington Park, Lark Street, and Downtown (Clinton Arts & Heritage District).

How:

- 4a Add wayfinding and QR maps highlighting local businesses.
- 4b Improve lighting and public art along State and Madison as evening connectors.

Tools:



Bundle 2 – Redevelop Key Sites (Mixed-Use & Event-Ready Ground Floors)

Outcome: Underutilized properties become mixed-use anchors.

How:

- 2a Support reuse of church at 235 Lark for housing and/or community amenities/performance space.
- 2b Pursue mixed-use redevelopment of vacant lots with event-ready infrastructure (power, water).
- 2c Pilot affordable homeownership or artist housing on adjacent parcels.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Village Events Spotlighting Food, Culture, Small Businesses

Outcome: Year-round programming that reinforces Lark as Albany's neighborhood living room.

How:

- 3a Expand existing street festivals and pop-ups with night hours and rotating markets.
- 3b Partner with restaurants and venues for joint events and art walks.
- 3c Coordinate with Washington Park and International District to share audiences and calendar support.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



Empire State Development

NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

Clinton Square Arts & Heritage District

Why: The Palace Theatre expansion will breathe new life into a historic artistic and cultural hub

	Needs	Existing Community Assets
	Lower population density — many parcels underused	Middle-income growth trending above downtown (+2.5%/yr vs. +1.6%)
	Low job density (≈1:4 jobs-to-residents) — few daytime employers	High share of cultural jobs (≈27%) in community-based orgs
	Few before/after-show options — limited late-night dining	Multiple cultural anchors (theaters, museums, historic houses) in walking distance
	Minimal commercial development (0 in last decade) — scattered residential infill only; poor property condition (≈150 homes)	Planned Palace Theatre expansion adds potential for housing, retail and dining
	High residential vacancy (≈19%); many vacant or underutilized (≈36%) parcels	Recent multifamily near Broadway signals market interest
	Limited brand / funding for cohesive programming	Active local orgs ready to unify events and marketing



NEIGHBORHOOD ANCHORS

Clinton Square Arts & Heritage District

Vision: A historic neighborhood reconnected to Downtown's core through culture, heritage, new housing, and year-round activity

Bundle 1 – Infill & Affordability Near Cultural Anchors

Outcome: Mixed-income and artist housing near key venues and future Palace expansion.

How:

- 1a Support and leverage Palace Theater expansion to integrate new retail, gallery, and pre/post-show activity spaces.
- 1b Advance infill housing on nearby vacant and underused parcels, including homeownership pilots.
- 1c Encourage upper-floor residential reuse of historic buildings.

Tools:



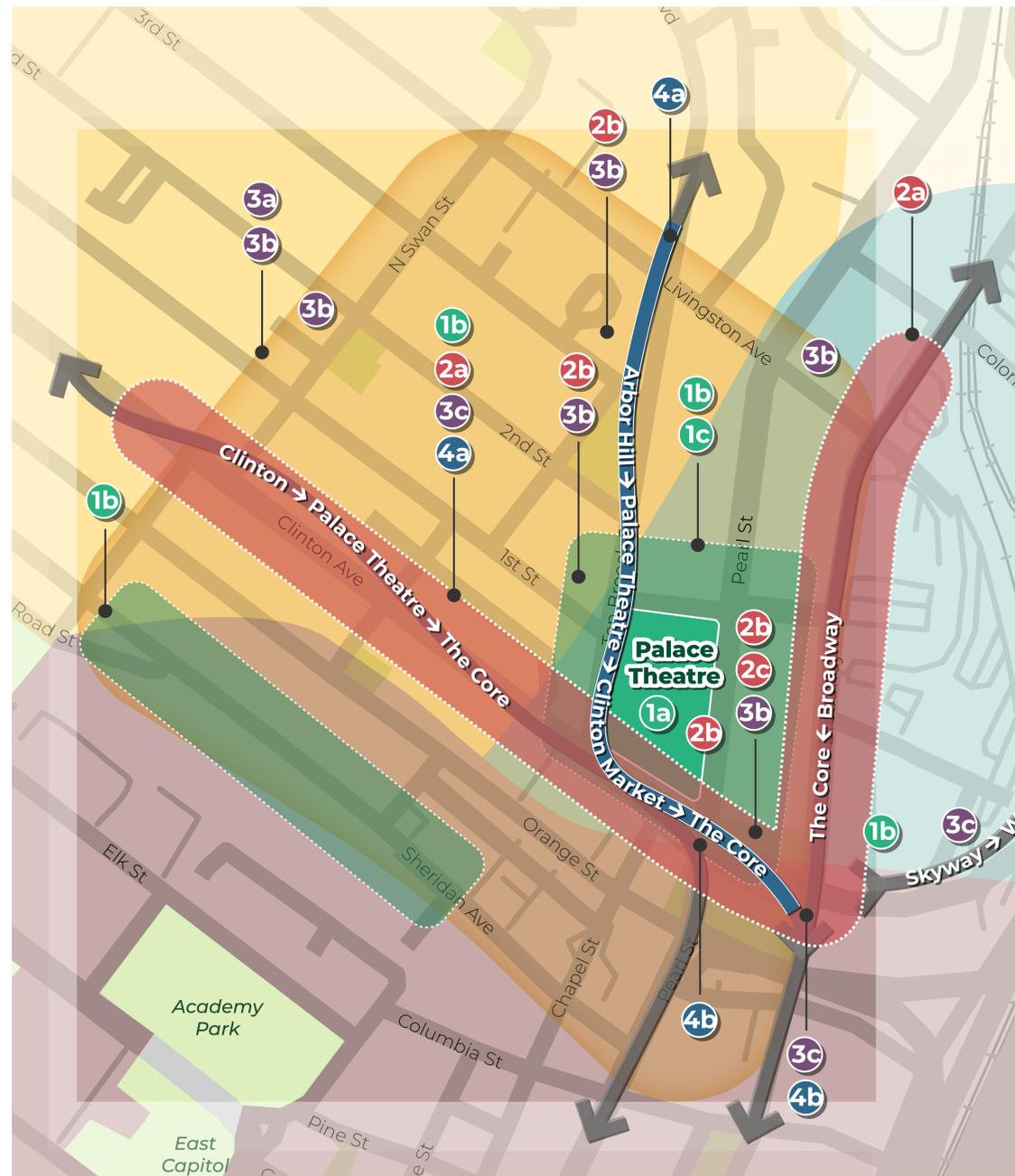
Bundle 4 – Arbor Hill ↔ Palace ↔ Downtown

Outcome: A walkable, well-lit corridor connecting neighborhoods to Downtown.

How:

- 4a Add lighting, art, and interpretation along Clinton and Ten Broeck Avenues.
- 4b Prioritize pedestrian safety at key intersections (Broadway, Pearl, Clinton).

Tools:



Bundle 2 – Public Realm & Small Business Spine (Clinton ↔ Broadway)

Outcome: Safer, brighter, more active streets linking Palace Theater, Arbor Hill, and The Core.

How:

- 2a Complete lighting, crosswalk, and bus stop upgrades along Clinton and Broadway.
- 2b Add “third place” forecourts (e.g., Ten Broeck, Federal Park, Palace forecourt) with seating, vendors, and pop-ups.
- 2c Support storefront improvements and show-night activations connecting to Clinton Market Collective.

Tools:



Bundle 3 – Unified Cultural District: Brand & Year-Round Programming

Outcome: A coordinated district identity with connected programming and venues.

How:

- 3a Launch a unified District brand and cultural calendar.
- 3b Coordinate Palace Theater expansion programming with other District cultural organizations and offerings.
- 3c Install targeted, District-wide wayfinding and lighting to connect venues, dining, and parking.

Tools:



Answer Questions in Local Guidebook



Empire State Development

Final Thoughts

Use the sticky notes below to add your thoughts to the board

What are you most excited about?

What would make Bundles/Tools work better?

What Happens After Today's Open House?

How Your Ideas Will Shape What Comes Next

We'll take what we hear today to:

- **Refine goals** that reflect community priorities
- **Focus ideas** on where they can have the biggest impact.
- **Identify and strengthen partnerships** to make change happen.



Next & Final Phase



Phase 3: Implementation and Governance

The final phase will turn this Strategy into action—creating a **clear playbook for getting things done**.

It will outline how we will:

- Launch **catalytic bundles**
- Align **policies and incentives**
- Coordinate **programs and partners** to deliver results