



City of Gary

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

October 2019





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# Acknowledgements

A lot of hard work was done long before the City started to prepare this Comprehensive Plan. This plan is the result of recent public engagement and data analysis, but really builds on previous planning work like the University Park East Blueprint for Change and the Green Link Master Plan. We would like to acknowledge the following for their efforts in making sure we got it right. These are the people responsible for the planning document that follows.

**Over 2,000 Gary residents** attended meetings or workshops, filled out surveys, commented at public meetings, and participated in the creation of this plan and other plans on which this one was built.

The **City of Gary Common Council** were huge supporters of our work, attended meetings, shared information with our residents, and contributed ideas throughout the eighteen-month planning process. A big thank you to **President Ron Brewer**, and **Councilmembers Linda Barnes-Caldwell, Mary Brown, Mike Brown, Michael Protho, Carolyn Rogers, Herb Smith, LaVetta Sparks-Wade, and Rebecca Wyatt.**

Our **Community Advisory Committee**, helped us direct this initiative from the start and tapped into the knowledge of many residents, business owners, and visitors to Gary who might not have otherwise participated. They informed our direction from the beginning, helped us prioritize what was important, and went above and beyond to make sure this plan incorporates the voices of a wide breadth of residents. The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) conducted meetings, set up surveys, and

gave feedback on their own *before* City staff facilitated a single workshop or meeting. Thank you **Tyrell Anderson, Kelly Anoe, Ken Barry, Peggy Blackwell, Alger Boswell, LaShawn Brooks, Anthony Cherry, Tonya Carter Sanders, James Dillon, Lori Gonzalez, Emmett Harris, Bernard Hawkins, Chet Johnson, Katie Kirley, Lori Latham, Esther Lewis, Simon Lillie, Sam Love, Brian Lyter, Sheileita Miller, Saba Mohammed, Lauren Pacheco, Burgess Peoples, Jessica Renslow, Brenda Scott-Henry, Gretchen Sipp, Cynthia Williams, and Dwight Williams.**

The **City of Gary Department of Planning & Redevelopment staff** worked hard to set up meetings, mine data, hold workshops, make copies, organize notes, reach out to residents, answer questions, coordinate outreach, and prepare this document. A great big thank you goes out to **Linda Baker, Mike Citro, Sylvia Collins, Devon Dorsey, Saleem El-Amin, Simmie Fluker, Alex Koerner, Cedric Kuykendall, Jacquelyn Lynon, Carrol Pirtle, Robyn Robb, Derreka Rollins, Sam Salvesen, Jeraldine Williams, Ni'Avia Wilson, and Jasmine Wright.**

The **City of Gary Redevelopment Commission** funded this project and provided guidance and input. Thank you so much, **Kenya Jones, Namon Flournoy, Eric Reaves, Pastor Marion Johnson, Bill Joiner, Jeremiah King, and Adam Hall.** This plan really would never have been done without your support.

**City of Gary Department Leadership** provided feedback, attended meetings, shared data, fact-checked, assisted volunteers, and contributed their time to make sure this plan accurately reflects the City's priorities. Thank you so much, **Dayna Bennett, Dan Vicari, Duane Hayden, Arlene Colvin, LaShawn Brooks, Bo Kemp, Brenda Scott-Henry, Diana Sandlin, LaLosa Burns, Celita Green, Angie Hayes, Paul Bradley, Cloteal LaBroi, Rachelle Ceaser, Deborah Delk, Shirley Hawkins, Nate George, Lloyd Keith, Niquelle Allen Winfrey, Rodney Pol, Greg Thomas, Joi Whiteside, Mary Hurt, Martin Brown, Anissa Smith,** and countless others.

**Former Mayors Richard Hatcher, Thomas Barnes, Scott King, and Dozier Allen** all lent their insights by participating in the Living Mayor's Roundtable in 2019. We truly appreciate their willingness to offer us the wisdom of their collective experience.

The good people at the **Gary Parks Department,** the Glen Park **Blind Social Center,** the **Gary Teachers Union** on Virginia Street, **Gary ArtHouse, City Life Center,** the Midtown **YWCA,** and **Beacon Life Church** in Black Oak were all kind enough to open their community spaces to us, so we could conduct workshops in each of our city's neighborhoods. Thank you for your hospitality.

**The Gary Public Transportation Corporation,** in particular **David Wright,** was extremely helpful in providing information and input throughout the process.

**Lincoln Chandler (Chandler Decision Services), Richard Leverett (former City of Gary Chief of Staff), Carol Brown and Jocelyn Hare (University of Chicago), and Tarik Abdelazim (Center for Community Progress)** were early advocates for better data collection and helped us create a strong backbone with the Gary Counts initiative.

**The Gary Housing Authority,** contributed data and plans, through the eager assistance of **Julian Marsh, Taryl Bonds, and Terry Mims.**

**Raimi + Associates (Berkeley, CA),** through the leadership of **Eric Yurkovich** and **Alessandra Lundin,** really drove the entire initiative from start to finish; they truly managed the creation of this plan despite "abstract" direction from the City of Gary team. To them, we are eternally grateful.

**The Delta Institute (Chicago, IL),** in particular **Martin Brown,** conducted hours of analysis to inform our natural context section and the Green Infrastructure Plan.

**Volte Strategy (Detroit, MI),** through the work of **Karla Henderson** and **Brian Watkins,** helped envision this project from its inception as we began our public engagement efforts and informed economic development policy as we planned.

**Fourth Economy Consulting (Pittsburgh, PA),** led by **Jerry Paytas,** provided thoughtful and creative economic analysis, while he and **Chelsea Burket** helped us frame this exercise from the start.

**Dynamo Metrics (Detroit, MI)** has been a partner to the City of Gary since long before this project started. **Ben Calnin** and **Nigel Griswold** spent literally years helping the Planning & Redevelopment Department build a data system, utilize the newly gathered information, and conduct thorough analyses that greatly informed our land use decisions and economic development policies; the G-STADS system they created is still utilized by the City as we make tactical decisions every day.

**Ancel Glink**, through the creativity and leadership of **David Silverman** and **Kurt Asprooth**, helped inform our land use decisions; they will continue working with the City of Gary to revise our zoning ordinance based on this plan.

**Gretchen Sipp** helped us immensely by gathering community feedback and enabling us to share our progress with residents on social media and through her substantial network of volunteers and active neighbors.

**Wendy Vachet** of **Michael Baker, International** was absolutely integral to this process by generating content, collecting and reviewing data, and making decisions while **Lu Ann May** could not be more helpful with data management and map making, often at a moment's notice.

**Jack Eskin**, former Deputy Director of Redevelopment, led much of the early work on this project and single-handedly pulled together the Natural Context section and Green Infrastructure Plan.

**Sarah Kobetis**, Gary's former Director of Planning, co-managed this project and contributed countless hours of work, creativity, and problem-solving, despite an extremely full work load in the planning and zoning office.

**Aj Bytnar**, Gary's Director of Redevelopment helped us contextualize this, despite inheriting an imperfect product. We cannot thank Aj enough for picking this plan up, adding finishing touches, and taking this entire exercise from concept to reality as he leads Gary's redevelopment efforts into the future.

Finally, we could not have completed this plan without the leadership of **Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson** who made it a priority to create a single, comprehensive, consistent vision for the City of Gary's future.

There were literally thousands of people across Gary who contributed to this document and we regret that each cannot be listed individually. For everyone that ever attended a meeting, made a phone call, contributed an idea, or simply lived their lives in Gary to make our city go, we really appreciate it. It never ceases to amaze us just how much the people of our community truly care about making it better. Thank you.

- Joe van Dyk  
City of Gary Director of Planning & Redevelopment  
(2013-2019)

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## *chapter 1*

# introduction

This Comprehensive Plan guides the long-term transition of the City of Gary. It presents a flexible roadmap for the future of Gary and its residents that reflects the unique opportunities, challenges, and realities of the city. The plan seeks to grow the city's population over time, while increasing the tax base and building generational wealth. It is a flexible tool to share information, encourage collective action, and rebuild Gary for the future.

This plan recognizes the many challenges facing the City, including structural deficits, declining populations, and blighted properties. This plan does not shy away from these pressing issues; rather, it places them within their historic and current-day context, and creates a flexible, long-range planning framework that allows the City to address these concerns in a thoughtful, adaptable way.

While these challenges will continue to persist, the plan attempts to build upon significant progress across the community. Union Station renovation, US Steel investment, ArtHouse programs, and the City's 5x5x5 clean-up initiatives represent the collective determination of the city's residents, businesses, and government to improve and invest in the community each individual loves. This plan captures these collective aspirations and actions within the realities of the city.

At its core, the plan is a long-range tool to guide citywide policy decisions about land use, transportation, and environmental issues. The plan is a unified vision for the future and a blueprint for how Gary will promote growth and adapt to change. This plan is the product of years of plans prior, community engagement, and historical successes and failures. It is intended to be easily understood, enabling and flexible to new ideas that emerge, and to provide a needed road map for the City of Gary's zoning ordinance and development code. This plan:

- **Consolidates all existing plans** – informal and formal – into a single document. It incorporates what is already working and includes updated community feedback and emerging ideas that adapt to Gary's evolving reality.
- **Provides a guide to regulations that are flexible and adaptable** to guide ordinances and zoning regulations that both foster growth and adapt to change.
- **Creates a blueprint for investment** (both public and private) that supports the priorities of Gary's residents and businesses.

When we set out to create an updated Comprehensive Plan for the City of Gary, we strove to ensure this document's utility beyond the City's Department of Planning & Redevelopment for years to come. Many plans had been written, many discarded, and few implemented. We asked: why do so many plans sit on shelves without action, despite robust input from citizens and good suggestions put forth by planners and City leaders? We reviewed each of Gary's plans, from the most recent 2008

Gary Comprehensive Plan to neighborhood action plans to community-led collective impact initiatives. Rather than disregard past efforts, we embraced them. This document builds on those efforts. It includes old ideas and new ones. It lists priorities based on up-to-date information and community input from all over Gary. Most importantly, this document does not prescribe what has to happen; rather, it enables change, adapts to market conditions, and leads the way for a flexible, longer-term regulatory framework to promote growth and improve the quality of life for the city's residents and businesses.

## PROCESS AND KEY FINDINGS

Our review of past efforts helped guide our public engagement and the plan creation. We found long wish lists, largely unfilled, while some fundamentals to zoning and regulations went unaddressed. We found really good inventories and analyses and helpful community input but without much connection to other efforts or coherence between them. And we found that many of Gary's most evident realities of vacancy, blight, change, growth, and investment needed to be thoughtfully addressed with better data.

Building publicly-accessible mapping tools, we analyzed tax collection rates, population changes, and existing assets from a variety of City and regional sources. At the same time, community leaders used the data to lead discussions on quality of life issues like civic engagement, parks, arts, and small business. We synthesized all that information and put **everything in a single place** so we could have meaningful conversations with residents. Over three months, City staff met with residents across fourteen neighborhoods, discussing priorities and ideas for the city and their neighborhoods. The following key findings emerged.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Many neighborhoods in Gary were built for an entirely different city in time. Formerly dense residential streets are now empty and no longer serve their original purpose of housing for mill workers. We need to adapt to Gary in 2019 and beyond, considering a wide range of uses in these neighborhoods.
2. Residents and business owners are worried that Gary's size makes it hard to maintain; the city's physical condition, namely blight, was the number one concern voiced by residents in neighborhood workshops.
3. Gary's extensive natural assets are both valued by residents who enjoy them, and provide potential as we modernize our infrastructure and manage flooding.
4. Investments serve the greatest benefit in and around existing community anchors and activity centers like Indiana University Northwest, Downtown, Lake Street, the Gary-Chicago International Airport, and along Broadway in Glen Park.
5. There is not enough land designated for employment. Like most of Gary, the physical footprint was built to support US Steel Gary Works at full capacity. That means most of the city was built and zoned for single-family housing. Largely vacant residential areas can serve a new role for Gary in the future.

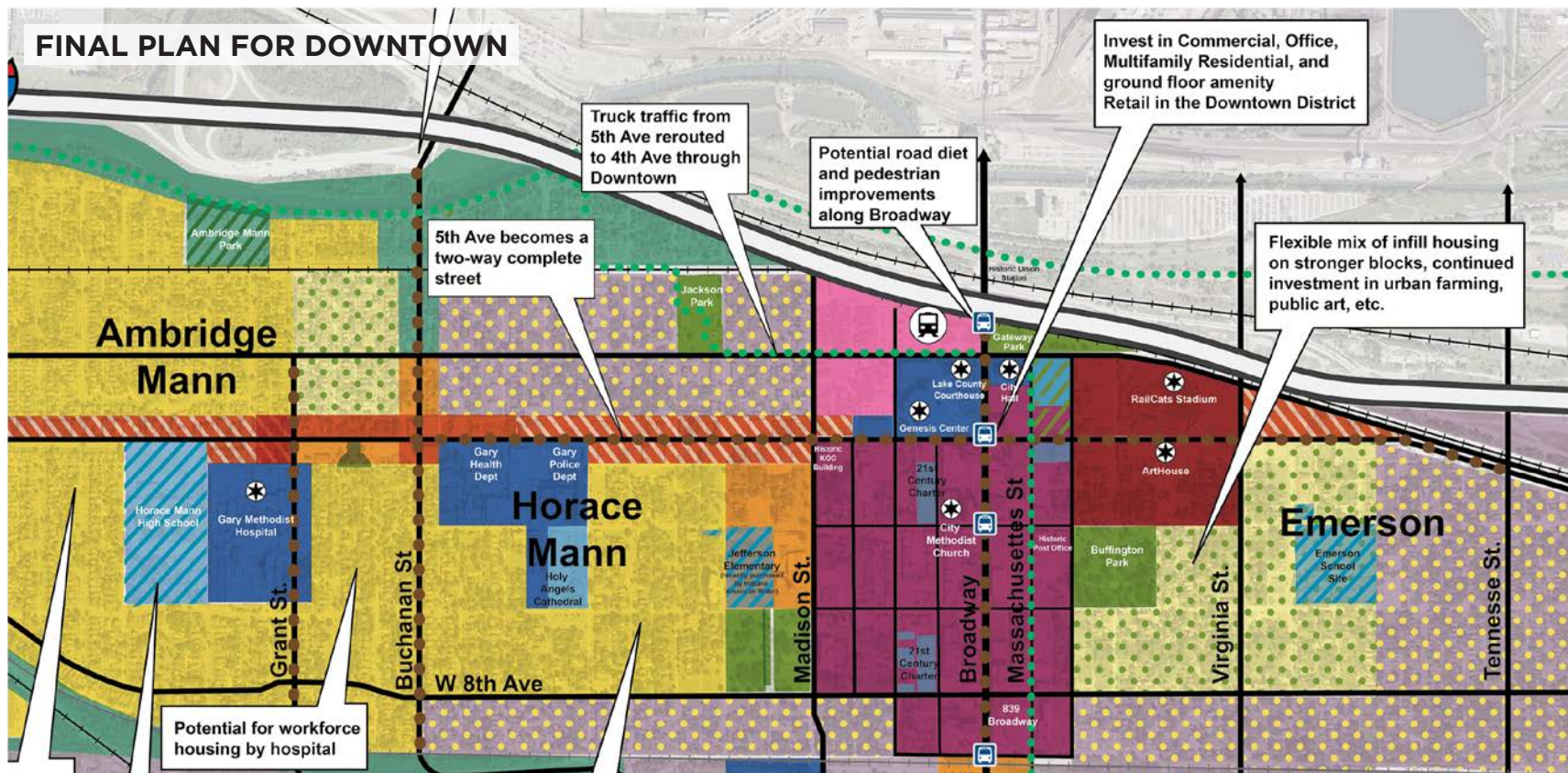


*Gary Welcome sign*

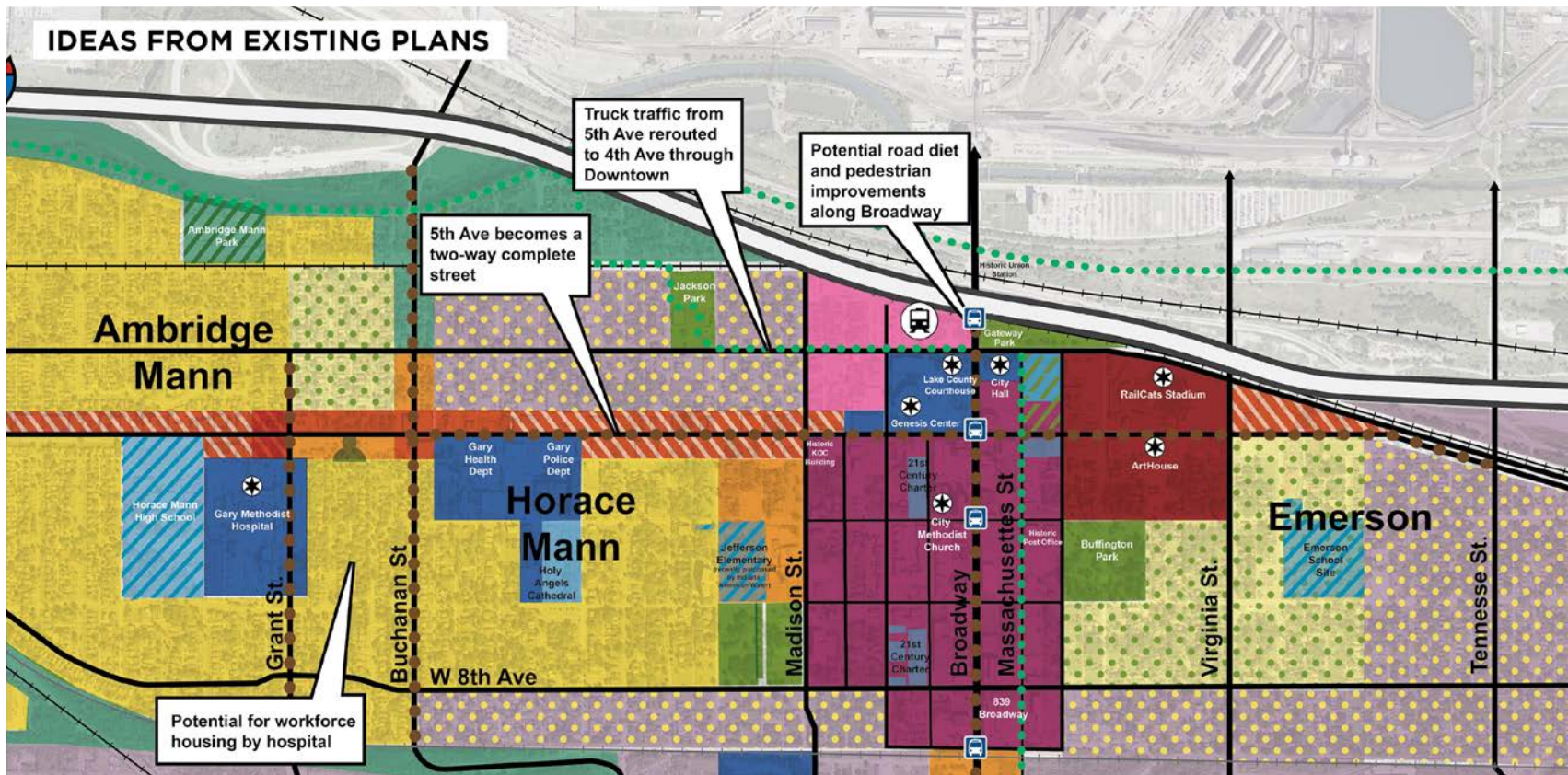
# HOW THE PLAN WAS CREATED

The “plan” part of this document lives in Chapter 6, presented through land use, transportation, and natural environment frameworks. The neighborhood plans for each subarea of the city contain maps and overviews that present future conditions and potential projects. They are meant as a flexible, adaptable guide to the city’s future and build on existing plans, current initiatives, and new data and information.

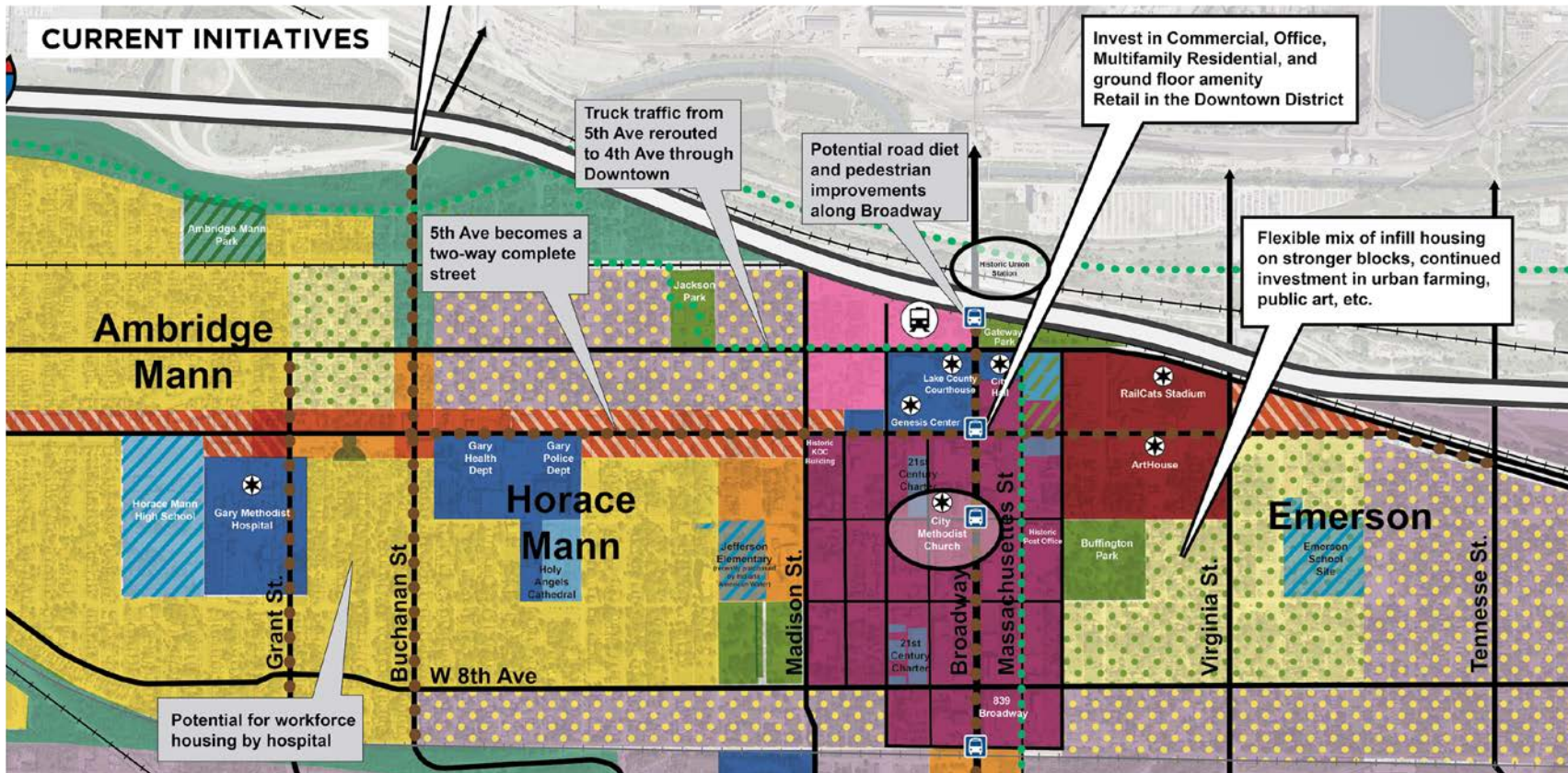
Downtown provides an example of how this plan was built.



- 1 Existing plans for the area were reviewed for ideas and recommendations. They were then vetted to find consistencies across multiple projects and public engagement efforts. We pulled viable ideas from neighborhood-level plans, community-based plans, and official plans previously adopted by the Gary Common Council, including the Livable Centers Plan.

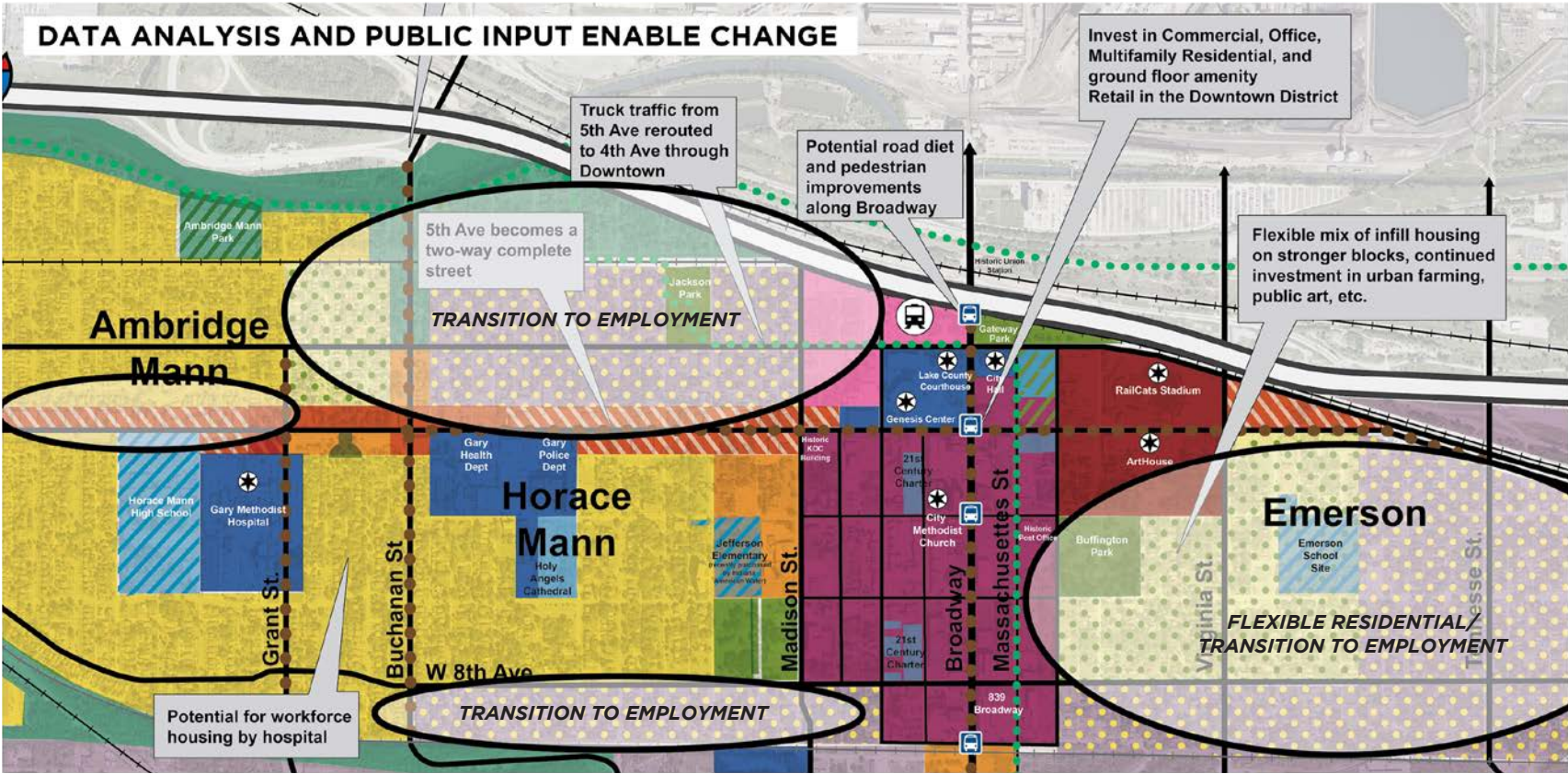


- 2 Existing conditions and ongoing initiatives were added to ensure continued momentum and that current projects are considered as we plan for the future.



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Where decisions had not been made or existing recommendation were outdated, we looked at data and spoke with residents and community leaders. The areas that were previously unexplored, or where Gary's existing conditions warranted another review provide opportunities to enable change and adapt to Gary's future.



# STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Indiana Code Title 36 Local Government § 36-7-4-502 requires that a comprehensive plan must contain at least the following elements:

- A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction.
- A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction.
- A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities.

This plan exceeds these minimum requirements and includes a Land Use Plan, Transportation Plan, and Green Infrastructure Plan to accomplish these requirements.



