

DOWNTOWN LAWRENCE
ACTION & ENGAGEMENT PLAN
ESTRATEGIA DE ACCIÓN PARA EL
CENTRO DE LAWRENCE

FEBRUARY 2020



_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC





project partners

MASSDEVELOPMENT

CITY OF LAWRENCE

TDI LAWRENCE PARTNERSHIP

JESSICA MARTINEZ - *TDI Fellow*
JESS ANDORS - *Lawrence CommunityWorks*
BRAD BUSCHUR - *Groundwork Lawrence*
MAGGIE SUPER CHURCH - *Lawrence Redevelopment Authority*
HEATHER MCMANN - *Groundwork Lawrence*
DEREK MITCHELL - *Lawrence Partnership*
MARIANNE PALEY NADEL - *Everett Mills Real Estate*

THERESA PARK - *City of Lawrence*
NATE ROBERTSON - *Merrimack Valley Planning Commission*
KAREN CONARD SAWYER - *Merrimack Valley Planning Commission*
EVAN SILVERIO - *Lawrence Redevelopment Authority*
ABEL VARGAS - *Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board*

consultant team

_INTERFACE STUDIO LLC *urban design & planning*

SCOTT PAGE
STACEY CHEN
BEN BRYANT
MARÍA GABRIELA GONZÁLEZ R.



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ANGEL BORJA - *New Lawrence Development*
SPENCER BUCHHOLZ - *Lawrence CommunityWorks*
LT. J. CERULLO - *Lawrence Police Department*
GARY CHIN - *The Community Group*
NOEMI CUSTODIA - *Northern Essex Community College*
HASSAN "TONY" DIAB - *Developer*
EVELYN FRIEDMAN - *Greater Lawrence Community Action Council*
MARY GUERRERO - *Cafe Azteca and El Taller Cafe & Bookstore*
YESENIA GIL - *Bread & Roses Housing*
LANE GLENN - *Northern Essex Community College*

RAFAEL GUZMAN - *Contractor*
JILL MCDONALD HALSEY - *Lawrence General Hospital*
JUAN HIDALGO - *Balis Restaurant and Malayas Nightclub*
YAKAIRA INOA - *RAY Services*
FERNANDA LOPEZ - *La Art House*
JOEL LOPEZ - *Viva Bar*
ANA LUNA - *ACT Lawrence*
CATHY MCLAURIN - *Essex Art Center*
MEKHI MENDOZA - *Elevated Thought*
LESLY MELENDEZ - *Groundwork Lawrence*
TOMAS G. MICHEL - *Michel PR*
ALEXANDRA NOVA - *Lawrence Partnership*
ALBERTO N. NUNEZ - *Coco, Early & Associates*
GISELLE PEREZ - *Si Se Puede*
SARAH PEREZ - *Perez Insurance and Financial Services*
YISSY PEREZ - *YCP Northeast*
RAMON QUEZADA - *Labor On Site*
FRAY LUIS ROSARIO - *Terra Luna Cafe*

GAMAL "JIMMY" SALAMA - *New Lawrence Development*
SHAWN SALAMA - *New Lawrence Development*
MIGUELIN TEJEDA - *Miguelin Contracting*
JUSTIN TERMINI - *La Art House*
JESUS TREJO - *Developer*
JORGE VELOZ - *Pentagon Studios*
KRISTEN WALLACE - *Mill City Community Investments*

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WENDY LUZON - *City of Lawrence*
DAN RIVERA - *Mayor*
EDDIE ROSA - *Groundwork Lawrence Bell Tower Management*
Everett Mill Real Estate
Groundwork Lawrence
Lawrence Public Library
Lawrence Redevelopment Authority
Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

Neighbors gather at the Iluminación Lawrence Soft Launch Event (2019).
Photo by John Andrews for Essex County Community Foundation.



INTRODUCTION

Project Goals

- › Liven Up Downtown
- › Design Great Streets and Public Places
- › Encourage Mixed Use Development

Our Process

The Downtown Lawrence Activation Plan kicked off in May 2019 and consisted of three main phases:

1 Inventory And Data Analysis

During the first phase, Interface Studio collected data through field work and public engagement to gain an understanding of the issues and opportunities of Downtown Lawrence. This process entailed:

- › A parcel-by-parcel survey of the study area to create up-to-date maps describing land use and commercial characteristics;
- › Census research to examine demographic changes over time;
- › A review of prior plans to ensure alignment;
- › A survey of residents, workers and visitors;
- › Individual stakeholder interviews;
- › Study area tour.

2 Vision And Recommendations

The second phase transitioned to visioning and developing recommendations. This phase of the process included:

- › A summary of the analysis and outreach conducted in the first phase;
- › Public events to present the key issues and opportunities that emerged in the analysis and activities to solicit ideas;
- › Development of preliminary recommendations;
- › Focus groups to review and provide feedback on key issues and preliminary recommendations.

3 Action Plan

The final phase entailed the production of the action plan and implementation matrix with the City and TDI Partnership.

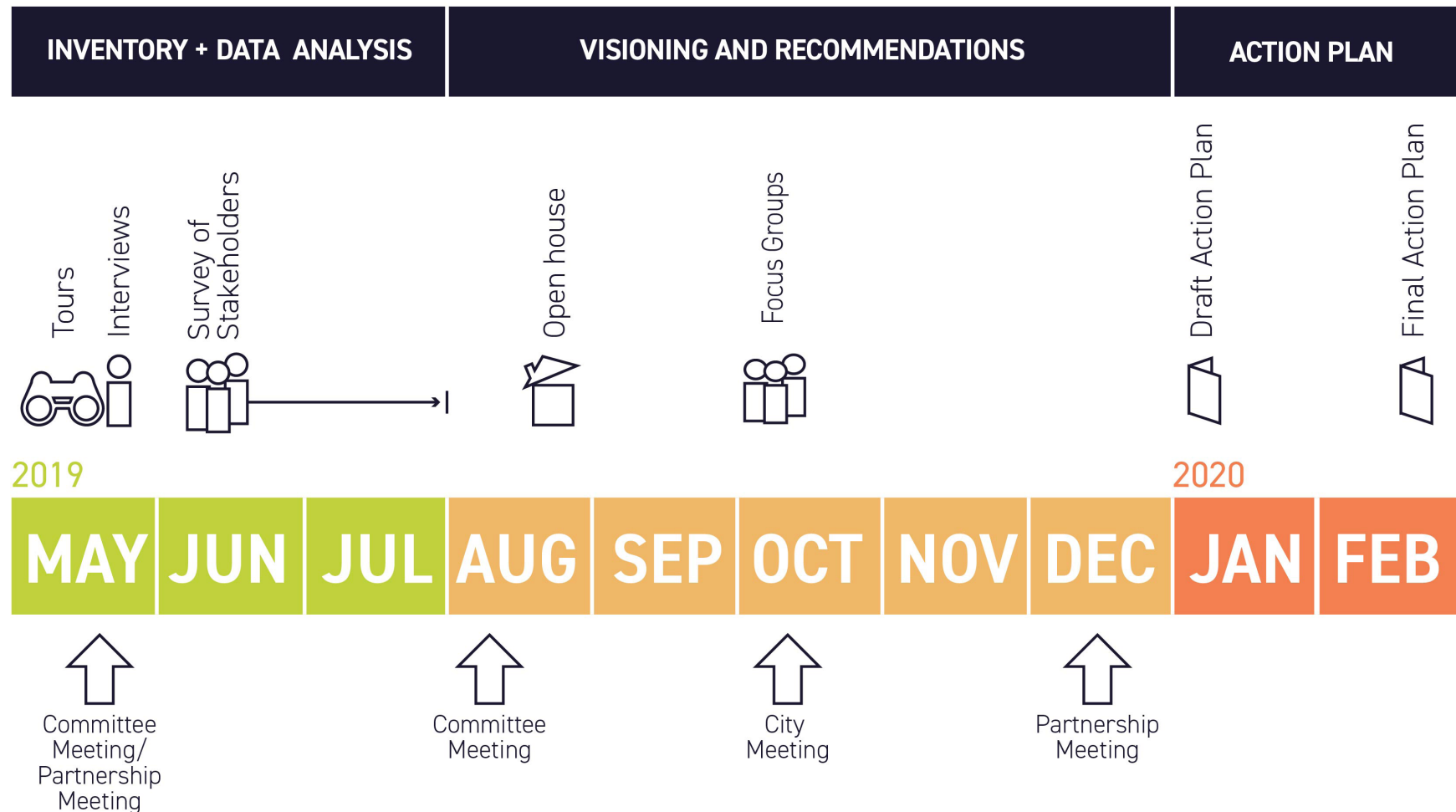
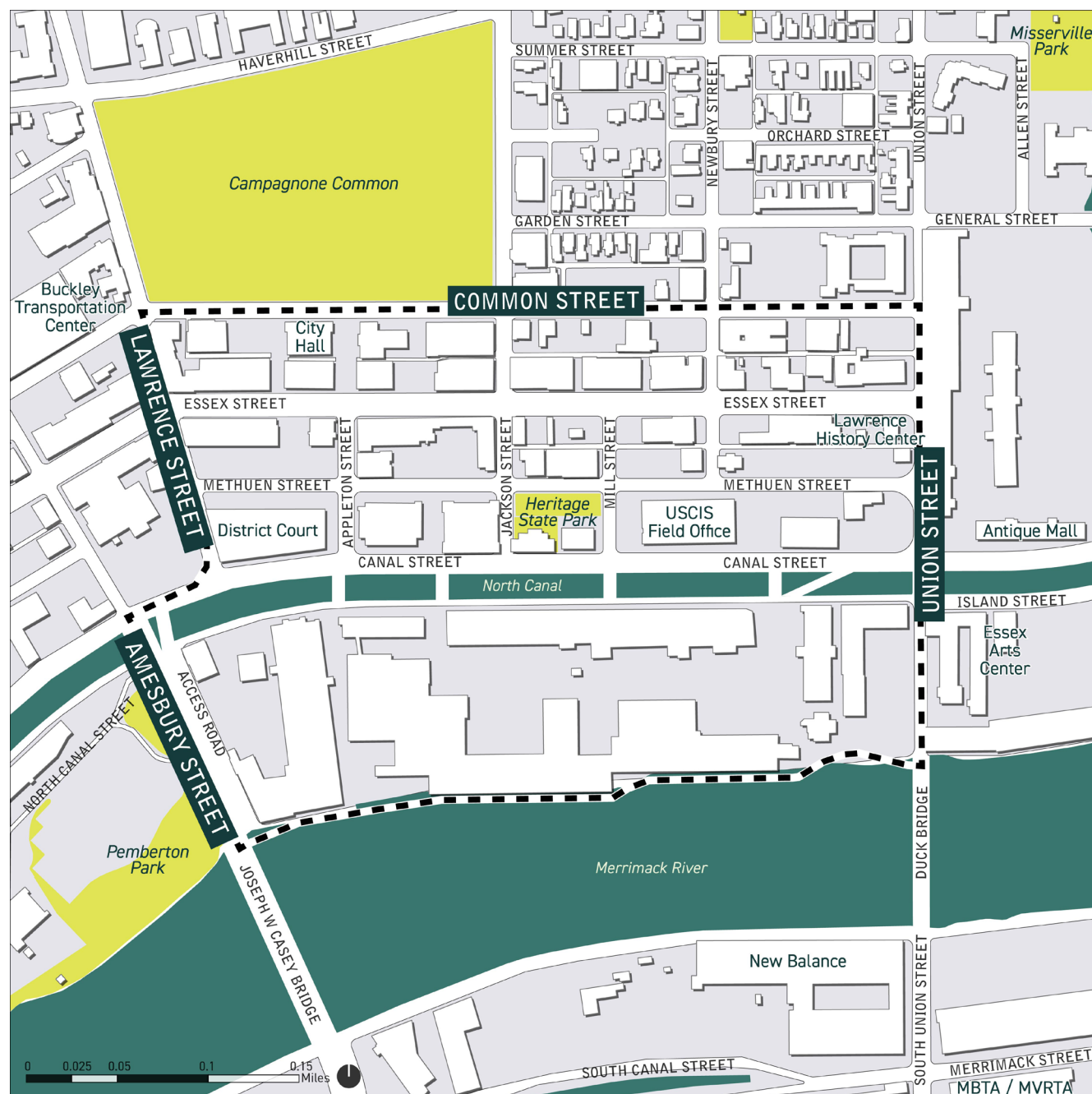


Figure 1. Plan process



STUDY AREA

Source: City of Lawrence, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission

- STUDY AREA
- OPEN SPACE
- WATER

Figure 2. Study area map

Previous Plans

2011

UNION CROSSING PUBLIC ART MASTER PLAN

The plan provides guidance for public art based on the themes of history, sustainability, and nature with a focus on buildings, bridges, streetscapes and the North Canal.

2012

PLACEMAKING IN THE NORTH CANAL DISTRICT

The plan identifies five sites for interventions. Three are within the Downtown Lawrence study area: 1) Union and Canal Streets, 2) Lawrence Heritage State Park, and 3) the Canal. Recommendations included increasing programming, adding amenities, and creating an esplanade along the canal.

2013

COORDINATING ACTION IN THE NORTH CANAL DISTRICT

This report offers recommendations on the Canal, circulation and parking, signage and branding, and development.

2014

LAWRENCE DOWNTOWN WEST PLANNING STUDY

The plan makes short-term recommendations for access, parking, streetscape and perceptions to be spearheaded by the city, as well as long-term recommendations for reuse and redevelopment of vacant buildings and sites, and changes to property taxes and regulations governing development.

2015

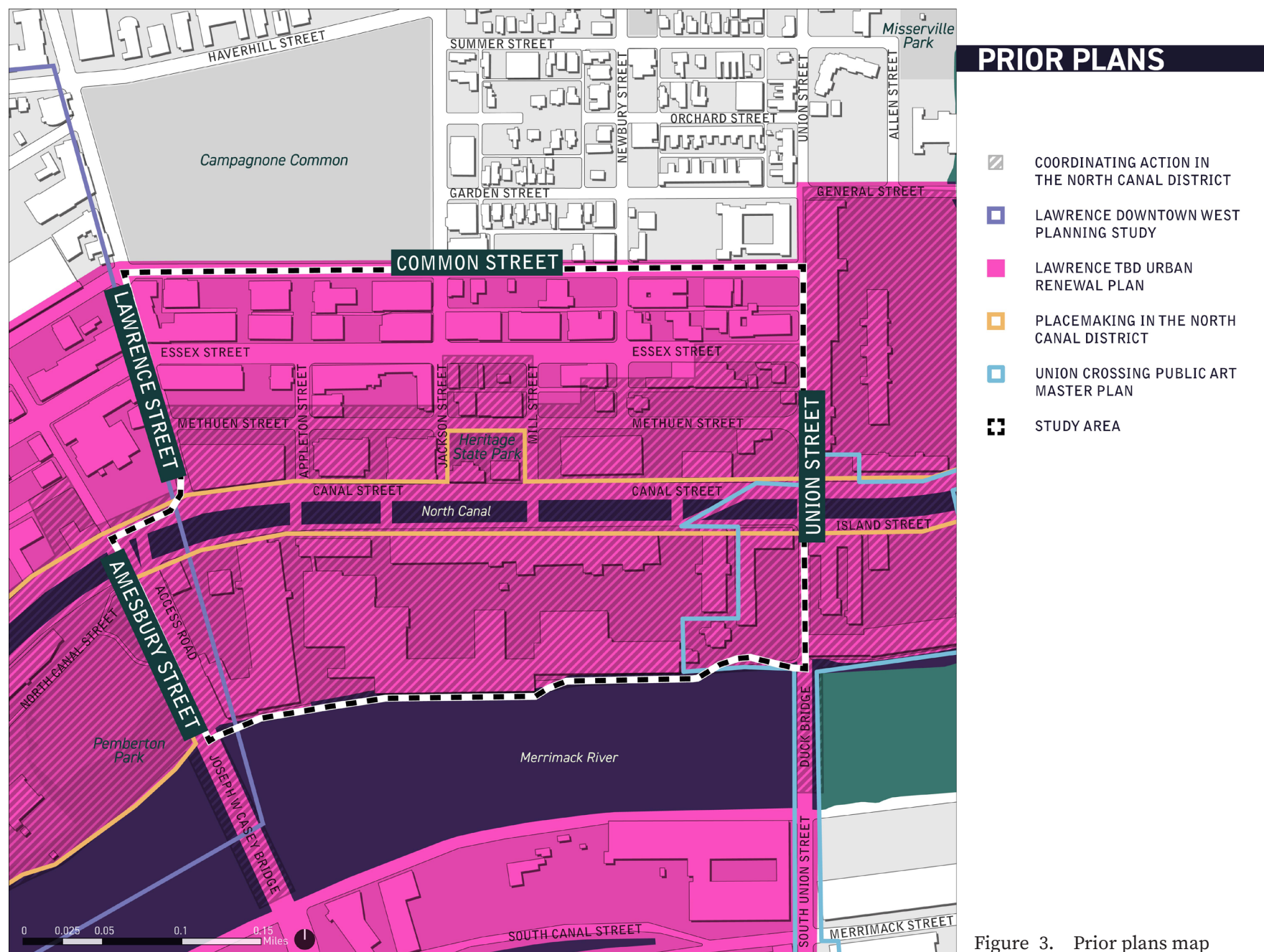
CITY OF LAWRENCE COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING STUDY

To increase affordable housing, the study focuses on capacity building, regulatory, development, and preservation strategies.

2017

LAWRENCE TBD URBAN RENEWAL PLAN

The plan looks to facilitate the redevelopment of large vacant parcels and promote adaptive reuse of the City's historic buildings and infrastructure. The strategies also call for streetscape improvements, safer walking and biking, one-way to two-way street conversions, small business support, and Essex Street activation.



EXISTING CONDITIONS



Lawrence is located off I-93, 30 miles north of Boston and 30 miles south of Manchester. It is about one hour from Boston on the MBTA Commuter Rail - Haverhill Line with a station just south of the Merrimack River.

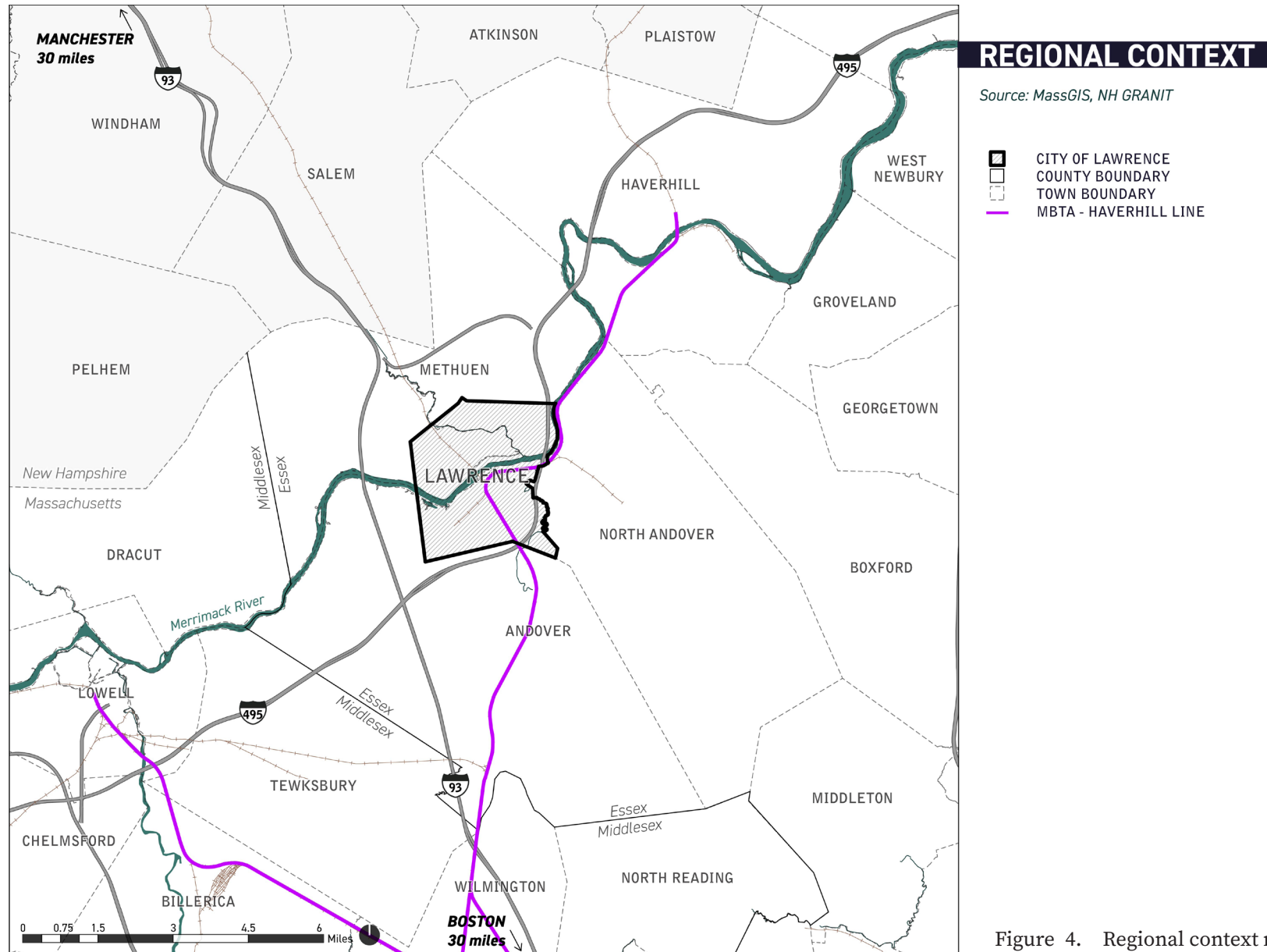


Figure 4. Regional context map

POPULATION CHANGE OVER TIME

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017

Lawrence has grown steadily since the 1980s.

In keeping with its nickname “Immigrant City”, much of this growth can be attributed to the foreign-born population.

Since the 1980s, the Latin American community has grown to become a majority today.

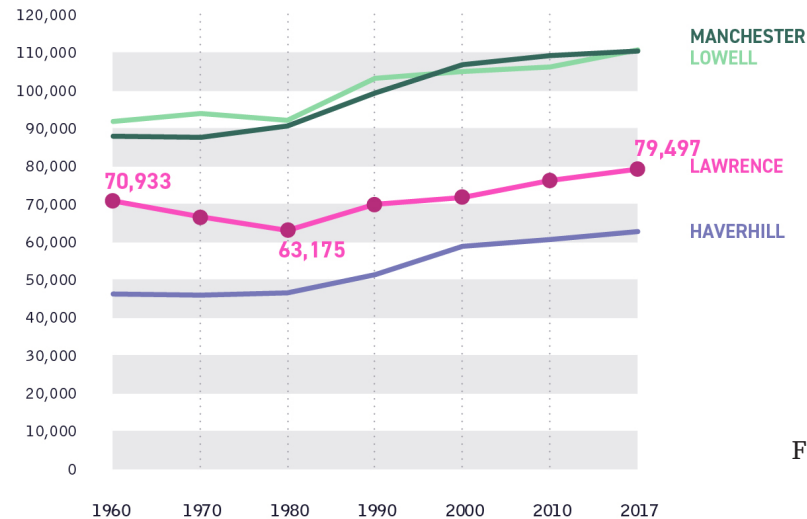


Figure 5. Population change over time

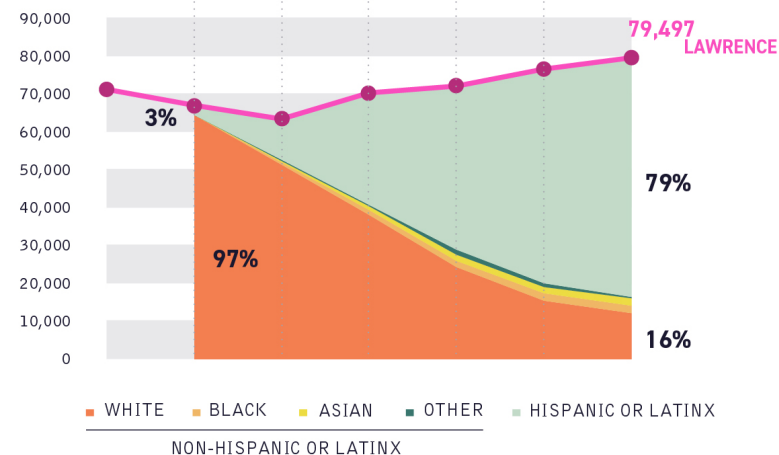
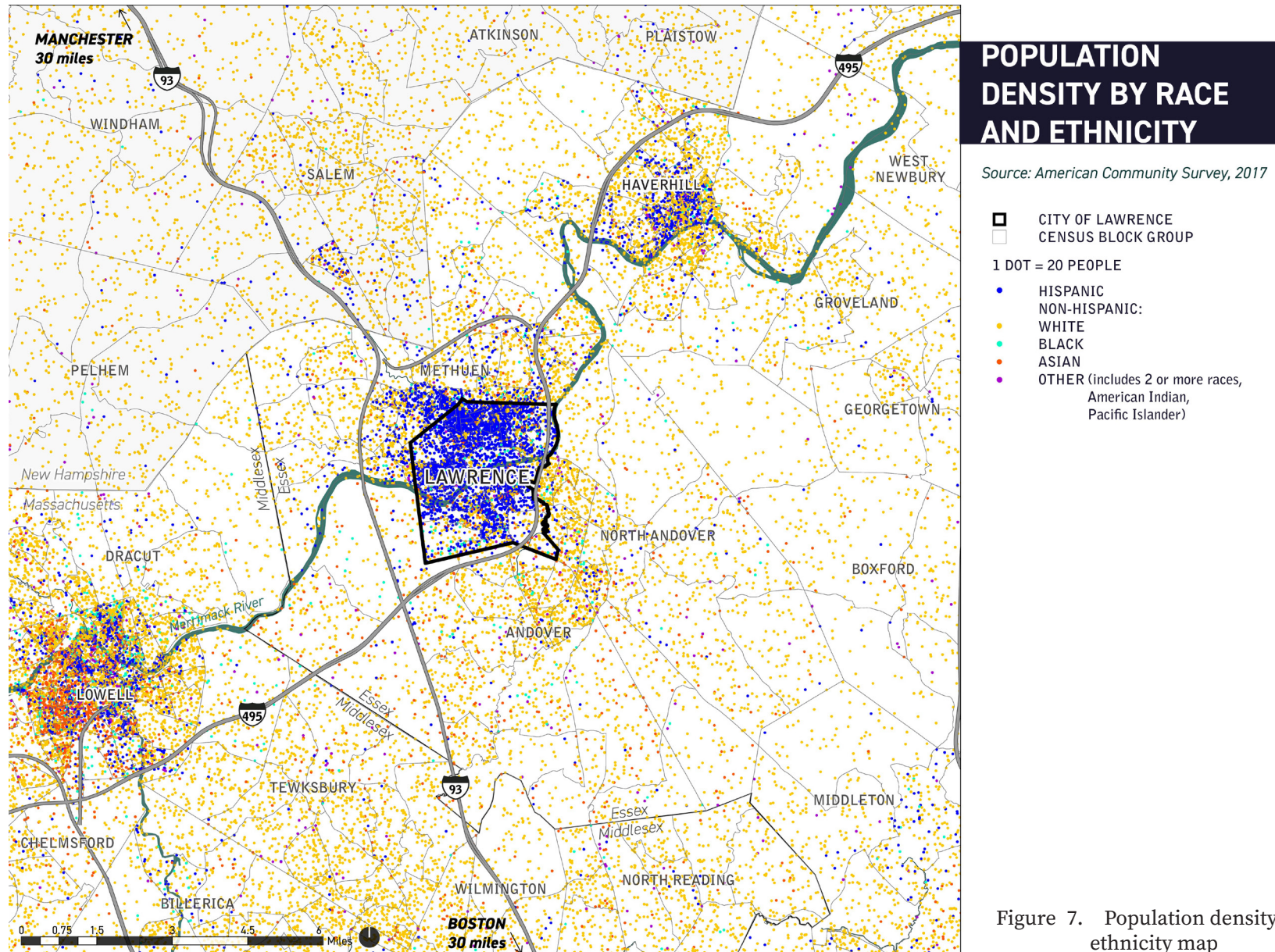


Figure 6. Race/ethnicity over time

RACE/ETHNICITY OVER TIME

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2017

Lawrence is a center of Latin American culture and a regional destination for events such as Semana Hispana.



62%

of foreign-born residents in Lawrence come from the Dominican Republic.

Other residents come from Puerto Rico (27%), Central America (5%), Mexico (1%) and other countries in South America and the Caribbean (5%).



The heritage of the Latin American community is present in the diversity of businesses and events, giving Downtown Lawrence a unique character:

[upper left] Restaurant La Rubia on Common St;

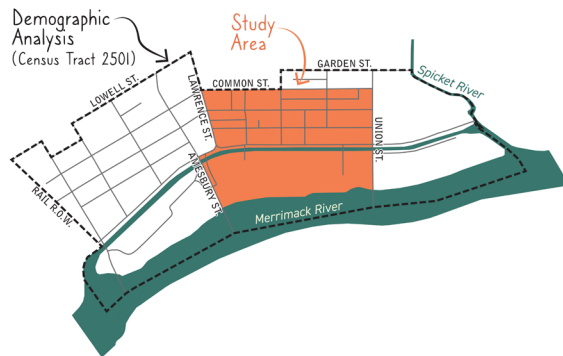
[upper right] a resident selling piraguas or traditional Puerto Rican shaved ice at Campagnone Common;

[bottom] masked carnival figures join cyclists of all ages at the Ciclovía event celebrated annually on Essex St.



Who's Downtown?

The downtown area is part of a larger census tract



Median household income is 45% less than the City and less than a third of the median for Essex County...

Annual Median Household Income

Source: American Community Survey 2017

The median income in **Downtown Lawrence** is **less than a third** of the median for **Essex County**

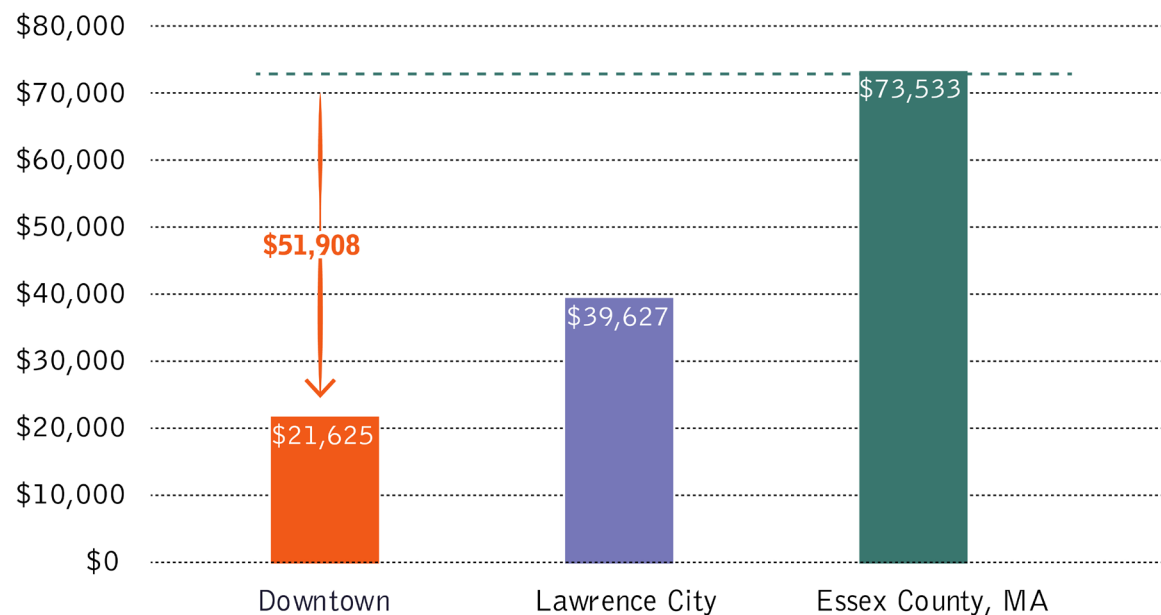


Figure 8. Median household income

... even when educational attainment in the study area census tract tracks closely with the City.

Educational Attainment

Source: American Community Survey 2017

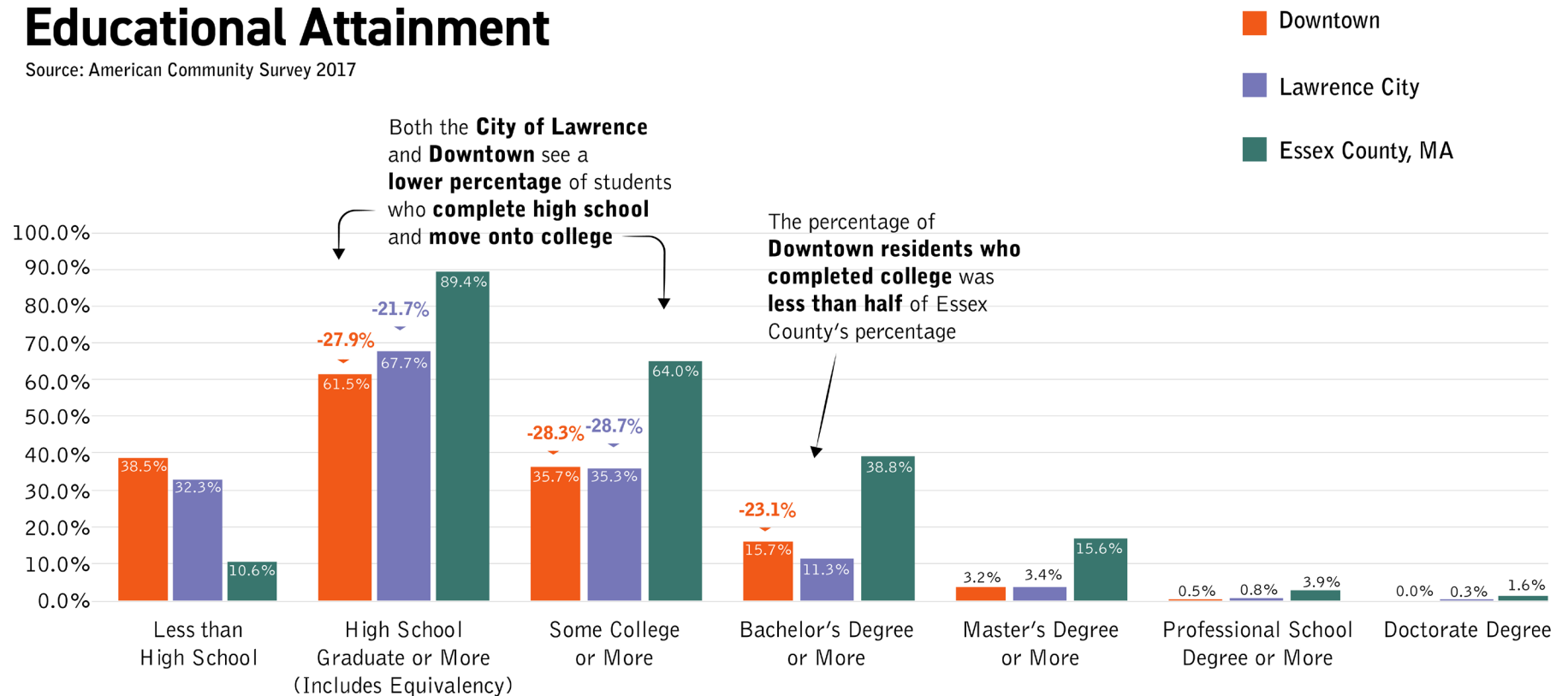


Figure 9. Educational attainment

Major employers, including the City of Lawrence, the Lawrence School District, Lawrence General Hospital, New Balance, and Northern Essex Community College, are within a half mile of the study area.

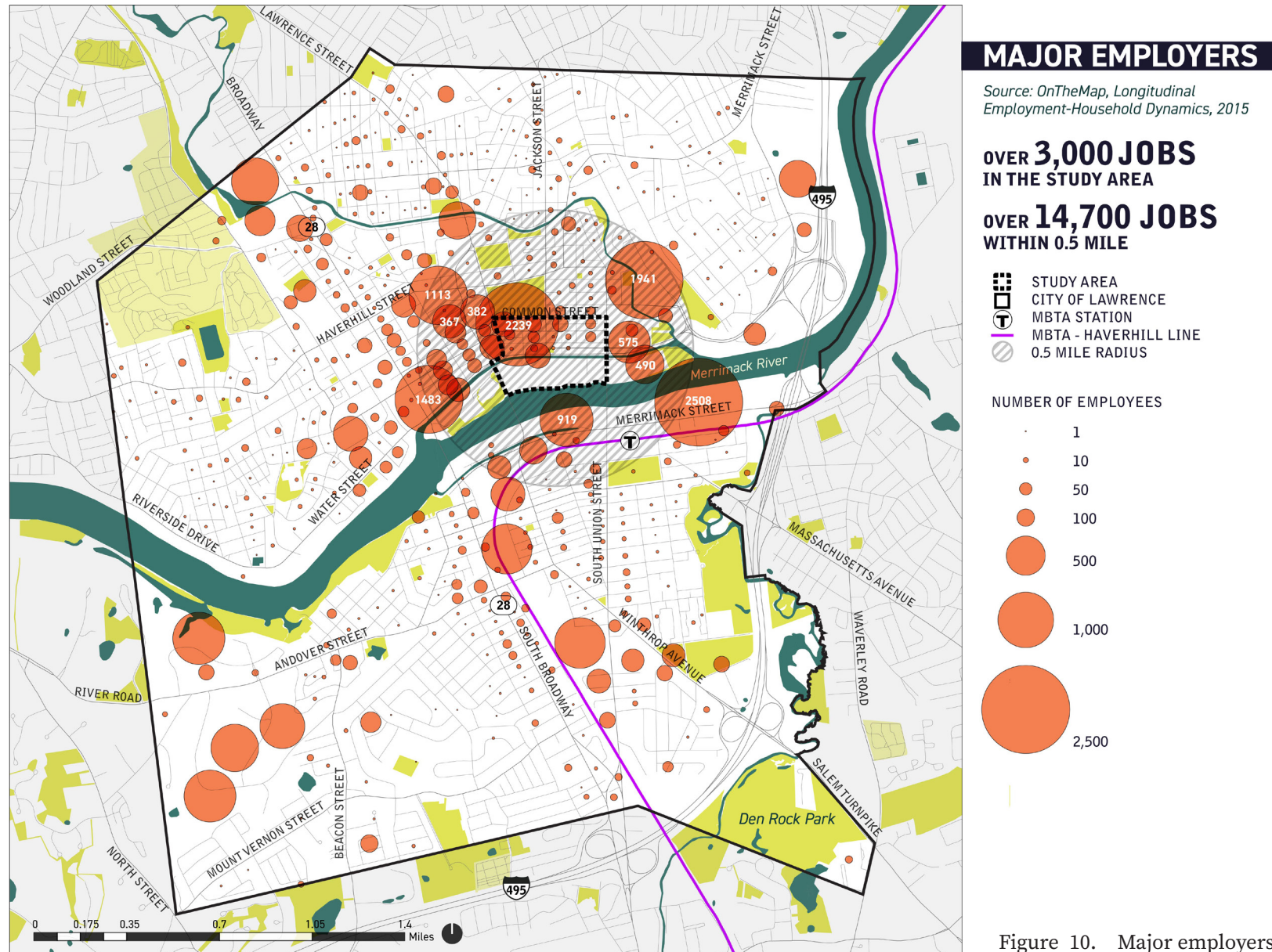


Figure 10. Major employers map

Downtown is a significant source of local employment, but only 27% of those who work in the study area live in Lawrence. Most workers commute from other towns such as Haverhill, Methuen and Lowell.

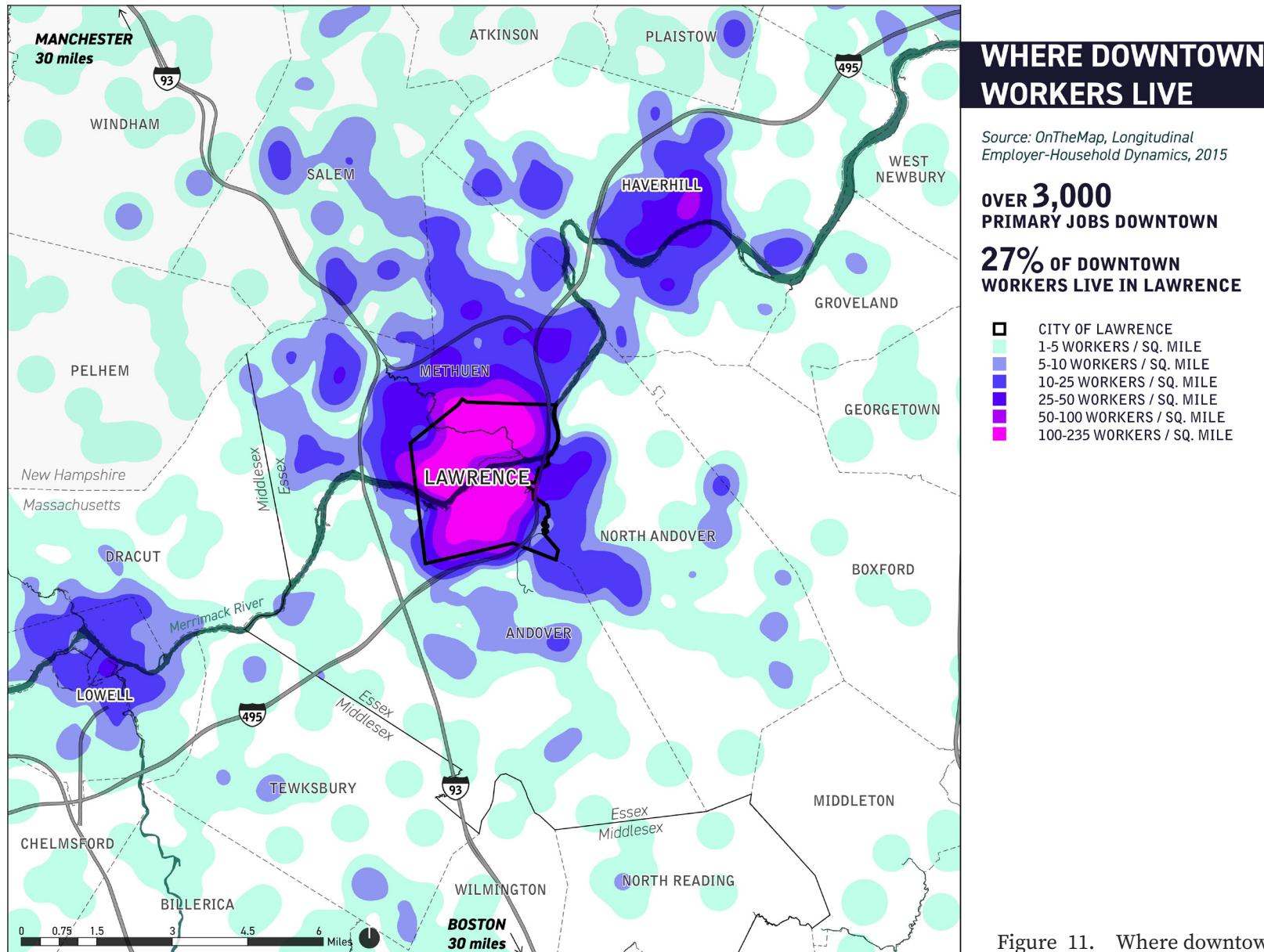


Figure 11. Where downtown workers live map

While it is not as densely populated as other residential neighborhoods in the City, hundreds of new housing units have been built over the last 10 years in and around Downtown Lawrence...

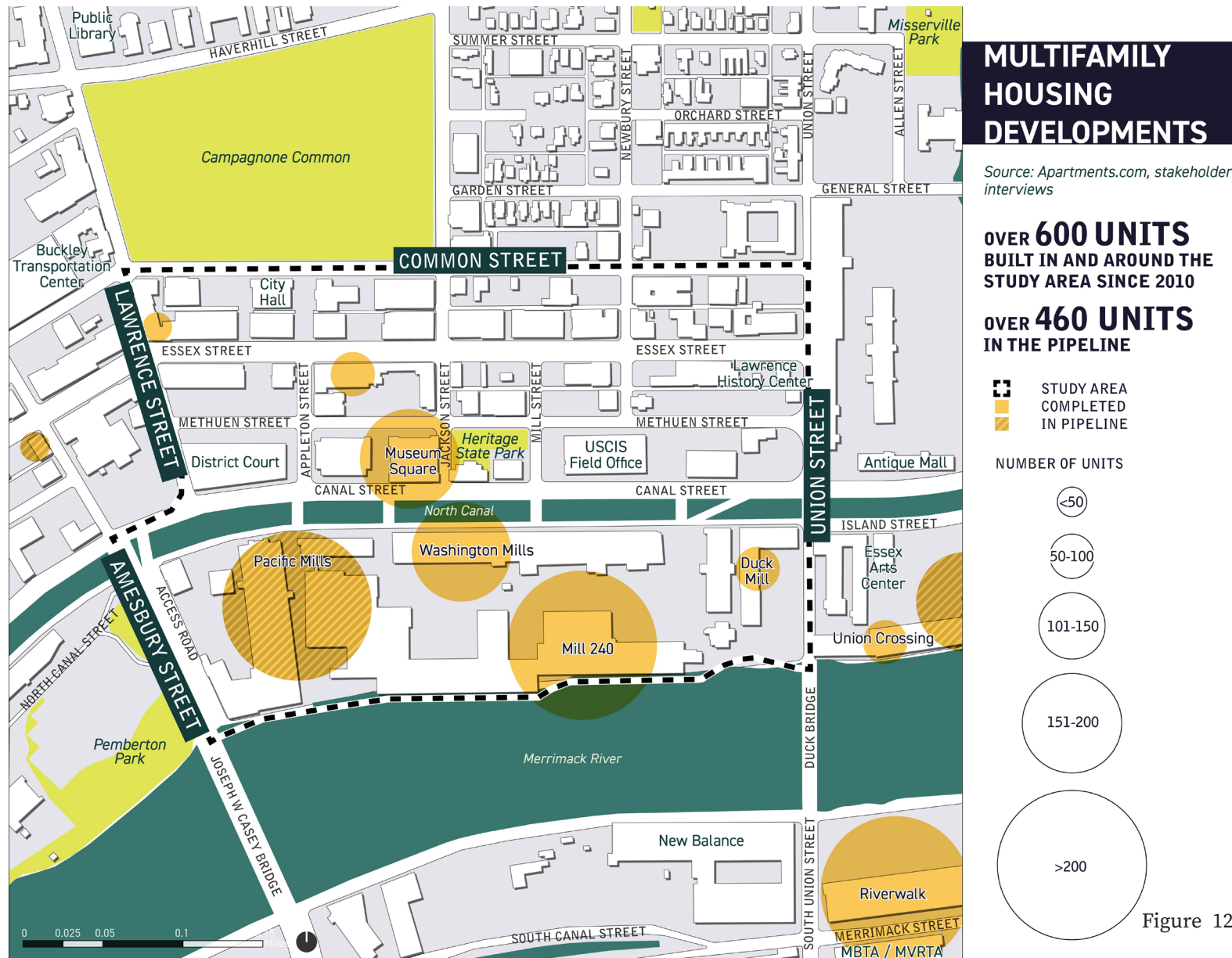


Figure 12. Multifamily housing development map

...and hundreds more are in the pipeline.

CAUTION
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AT OWN RISK



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Coming Soon!**

For More Information Please Call 866.422.9210

www.mill240.com

Live in History While Making Your Own

Mill 240 is one of many mill buildings near the study area that are being converted into apartment buildings.

Where is activity concentrated?



Essex St and Appleton Way are the center of activity in Downtown Lawrence.

The Downtown core is centered around Essex Street, especially between Lawrence and Jackson Streets, and the mill buildings are a growing activity hub.

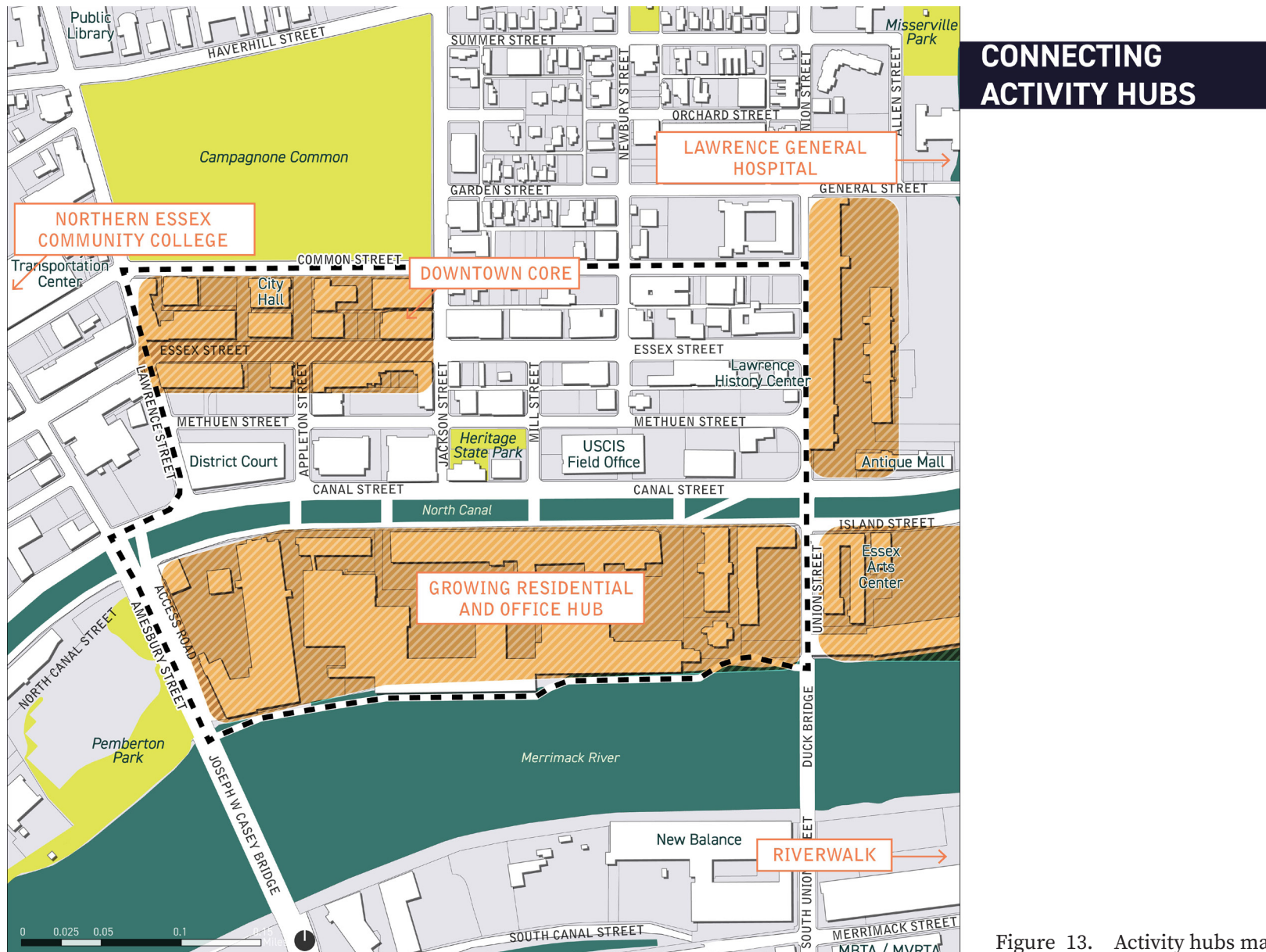


Figure 13. Activity hubs map

Significant investment has been made in the mill buildings on the island and along Essex Street.

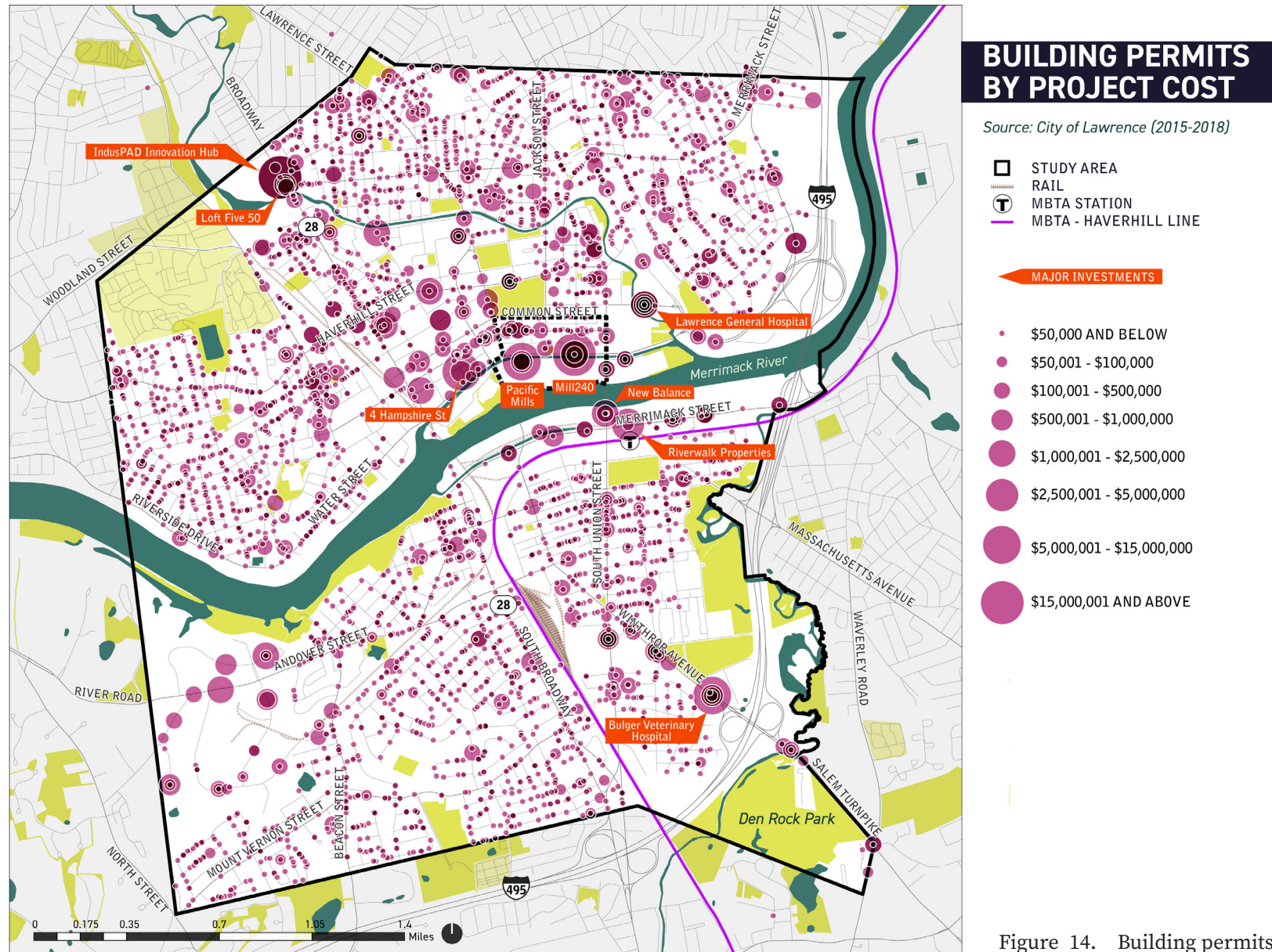


Figure 14. Building permits map

Residential and mixed commercial/residential use make up the largest amount of land in the study area, 30% and 19% respectively, due to the size of the mill parcels on Middle Island. Essex Street is mainly commercial.

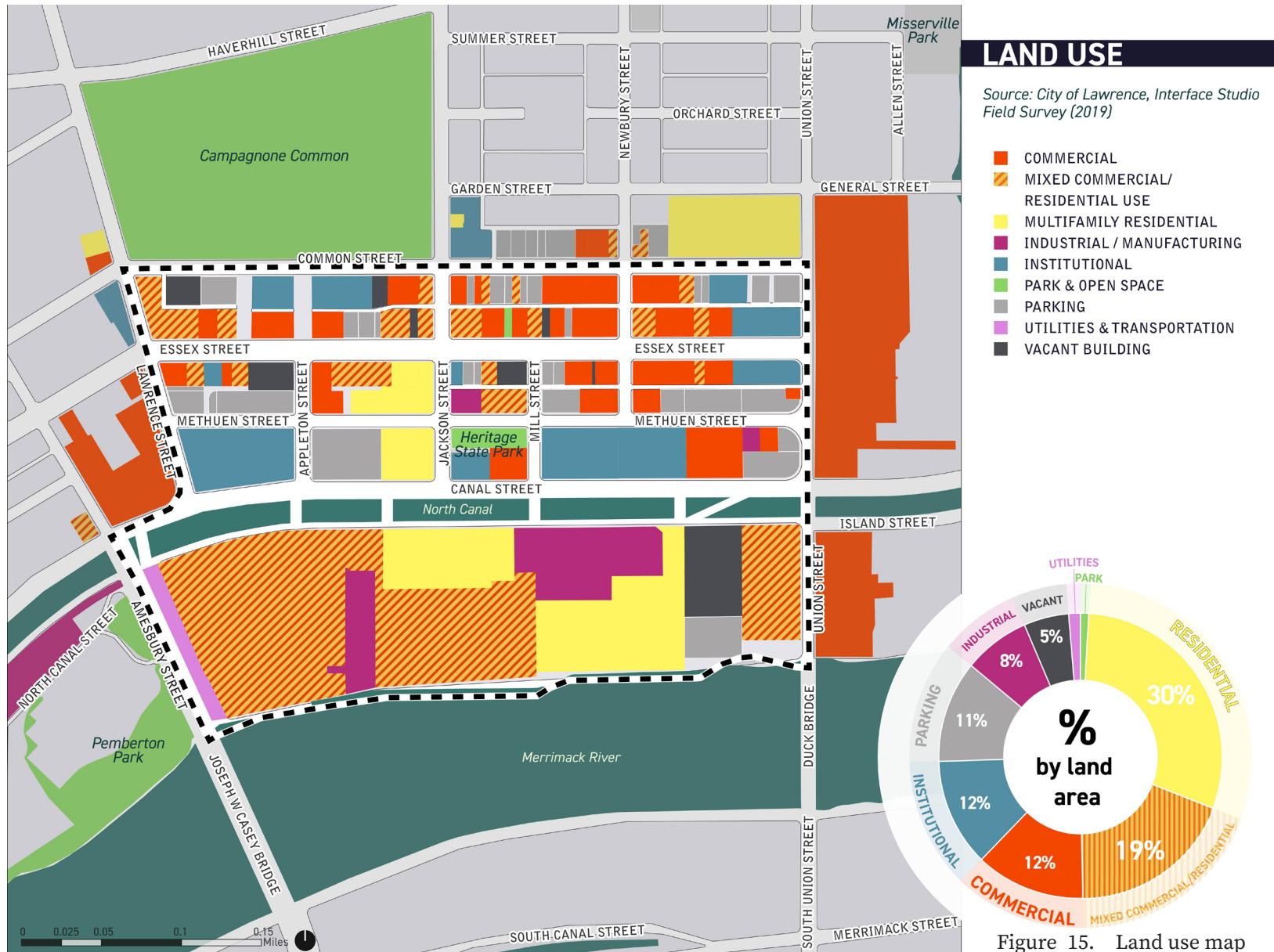


Figure 15. Land use map

Essex Street and, to a lesser extent, Common Street are the main commercial corridors.

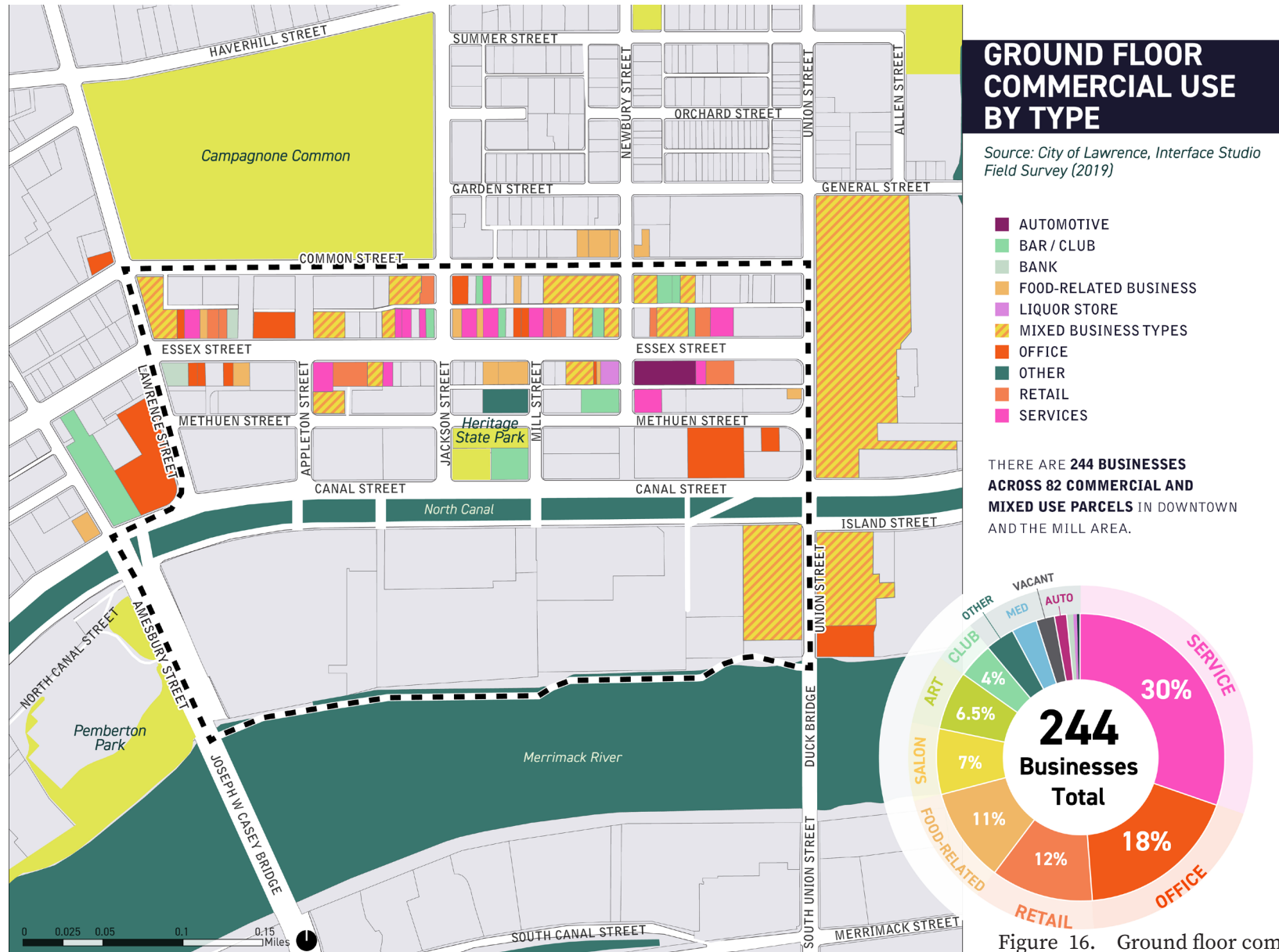


Figure 16. Ground floor commercial use map



The Downtown Lawrence study area has many examples of successful businesses that have become emblematic in the community:

- [upper left]** El Taller on Essex St.;
- [upper right]** Tripoli Pizza and Bakery on Common St, which has been open since 1944;
- [bottom]** Terra Luna Cafe on Essex St.

There is a range of business hours in the study area. Most businesses are open during the day but hours vary or are not always posted. At night, the eastern side of the study area comes alive with bars, clubs and related businesses.



Figure 17. Business activity hours maps



18%

of businesses in Downtown Lawrence are open during nighttime, a stark contrast with **96% of businesses** that are open during the day.

3 in every 4

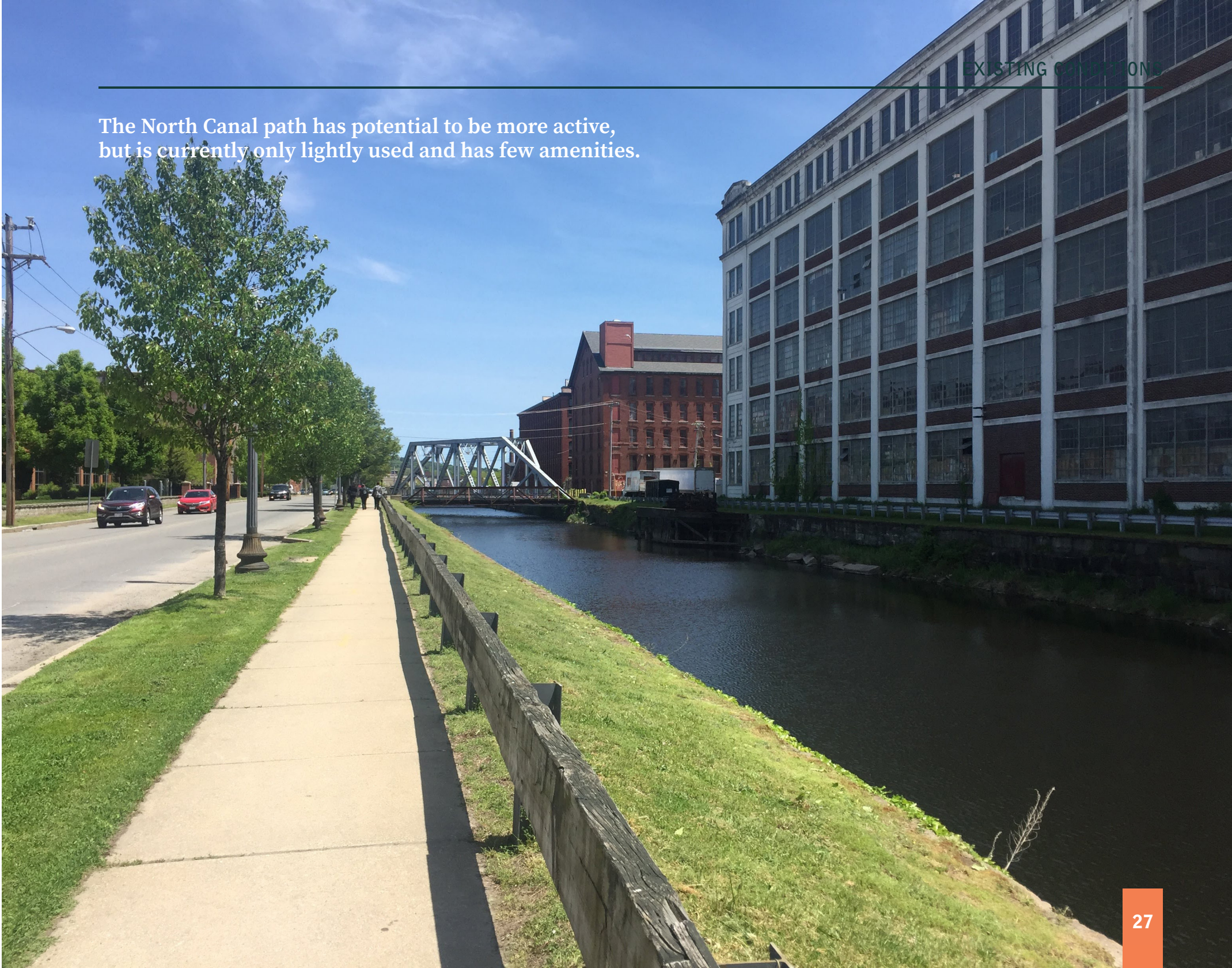
businesses in the study area **do not** have visible business hours.

A number of leisure and institutional destinations are concentrated in the study area.



Figure 18. Assets and destinations map

The North Canal path has potential to be more active, but is currently only lightly used and has few amenities.



Downtown is a destination for several big annual events but smaller-scale, more frequent events that can enliven the day-to-day experience are rarer.

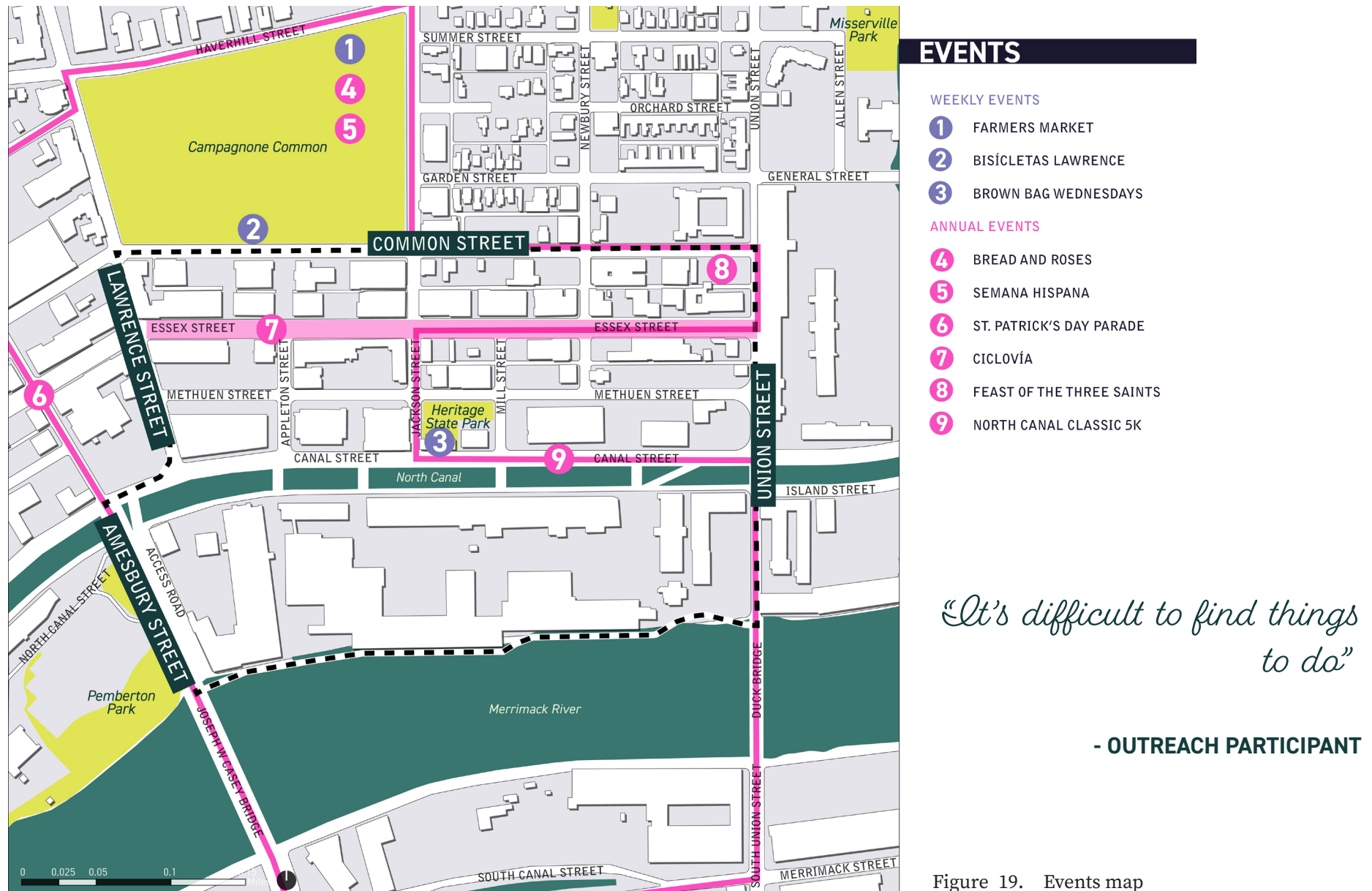


Figure 19. Events map



DOWNTOWN EVENTS

EVENT	LOCATION	TIME OF YEAR	FREQUENCY
St. Patrick's Day Parade	Cross through study area	March	Annual
North Canal Classic 5K	Cross through study area	May	Annual
Semana Hispana	Campagnone (North) Common	June	Annual
Farmers Market	Campagnone (North) Common	June-September	Weekly
US Independence Day	City Hall	July	Annual
Ciclovía	Essex Street	August	Annual
Bread and Roses Heritage Festival	Campagnone (North) Common	September	Annual
Feast of Three Saints Festival	Common/Union Street	September	Annual
Oktoberfest	Essex Arts Center	October	Annual
Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony	City Hall	December	Annual
biSicletas Lawrence	Campagnone (North) Common	May-October	Weekly
Brown Bag Wednesdays	Heritage State Park	June-September	Weekly

[upper left] Drummers perform in Pemberton Park for the soft launch of Iluminación Lawrence (Eric Romero, 2019).

[upper right] St. Alfio's Marching Band takes the streets of Lawrence for the annual celebration of the Three Saints Feast (Eagle Tribune, 2018).

Where are the barriers and gaps in activity?



Businesses on Newbury Street are open but keep their shutters half-way down.

Vacancy is low in the study area, but partial commercial vacancy, storefront conditions, and variable business hours make it feel more vacant.

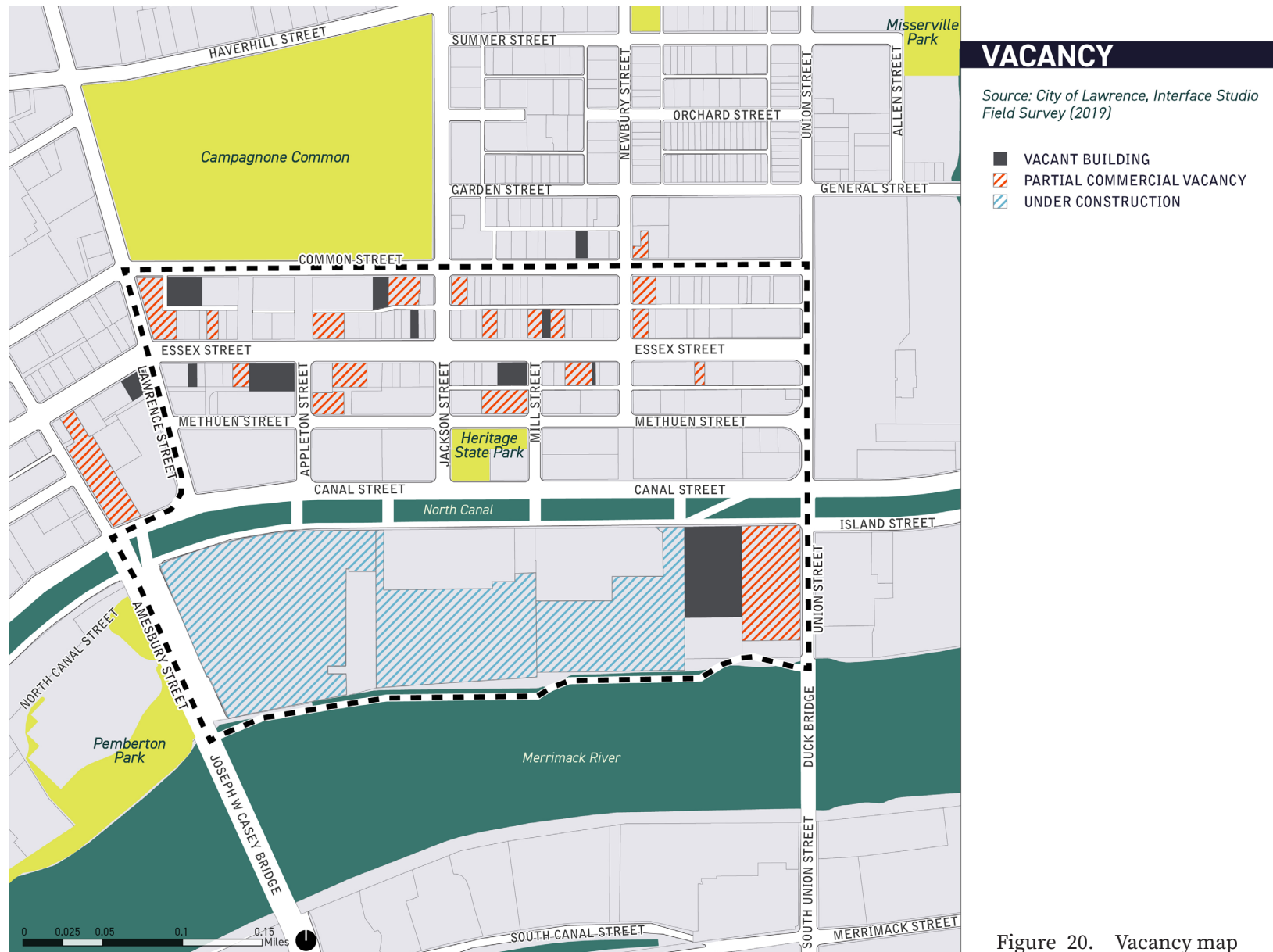


Figure 20. Vacancy map

Crime, a commonly cited concern, has declined in the study area for the past five years in keeping with city-wide trends. The heat map for violent crime shows clustering around the nightclubs.



Figure 21. Violent crime (2017-2018) map

Property crime, which declined by the greatest amount, is more dispersed.

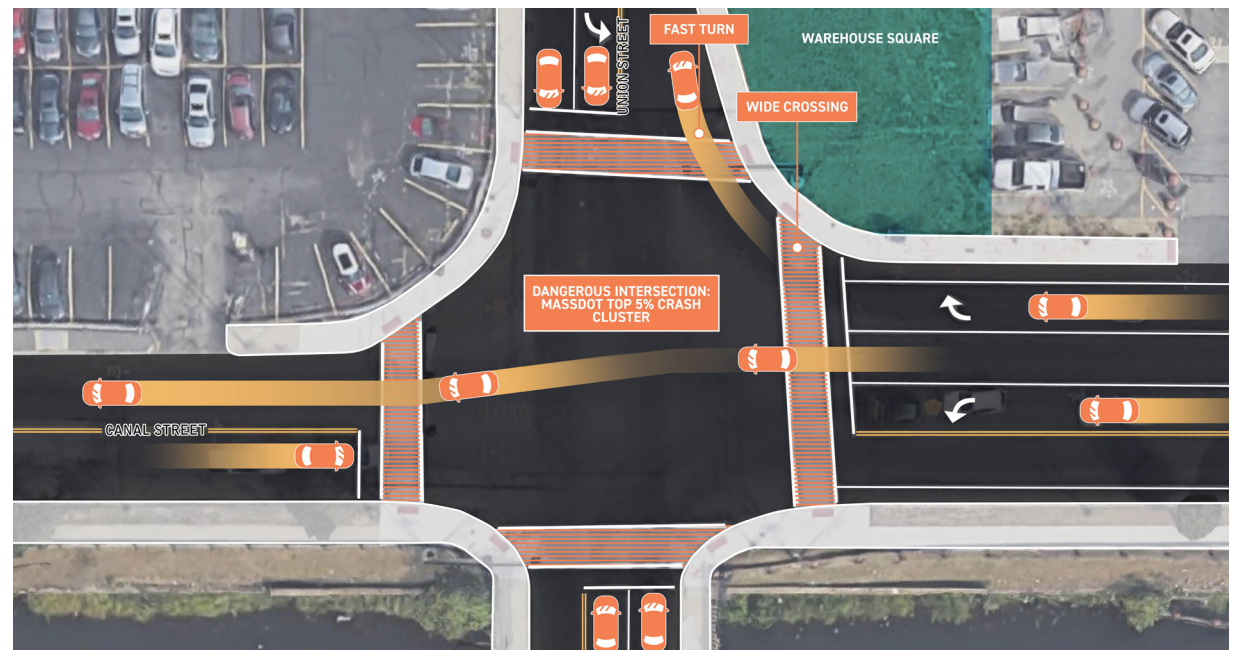


Figure 22. Property crime (2017-2018) map

Crashes are a concern in the study area, particularly around the Downtown core which is a pedestrian crash cluster and at intersections with Canal Street, which are identified by MassDOT as top 5% crash clusters.



Figure 23. Crash map



[above] Intersection of Union St and Canal St.

[right] A plan view shows some of the safety hazards identified during the field survey (interface Studio, 2019).

Downtown circulation is complicated by several one-way streets – Common Street, Lawrence Street, and Amesbury Street – which place a burden on Essex Street.

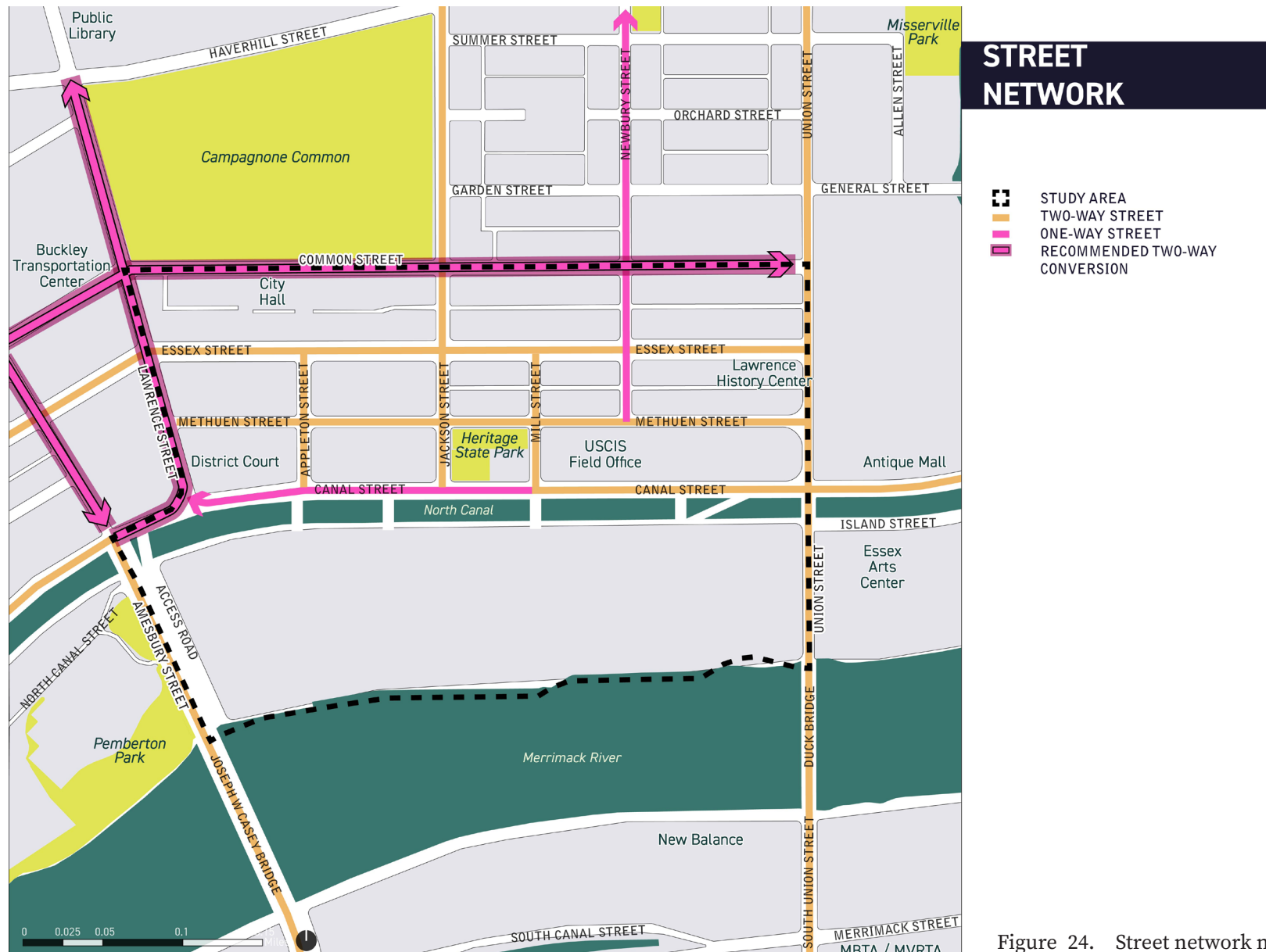
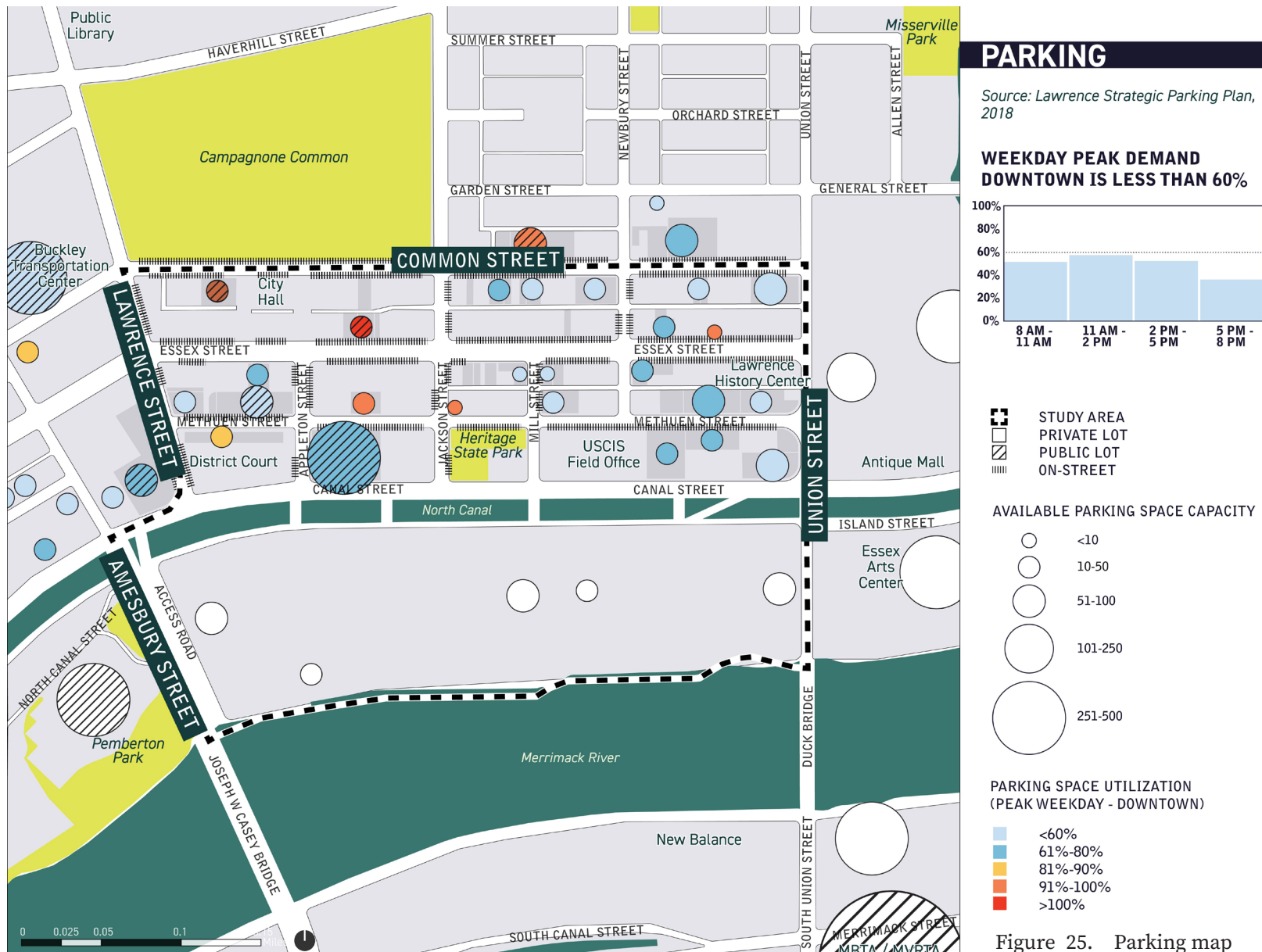


Figure 24. Street network map

Parking occupies a significant portion of the study area but is underutilized. Weekday peak demand is less than 60%.



The pedestrian experience is challenged by inactive frontages, such as parking lots, inactive or deteriorated storefronts, cracked sidewalks, out-of-date signs and neglected street amenities.

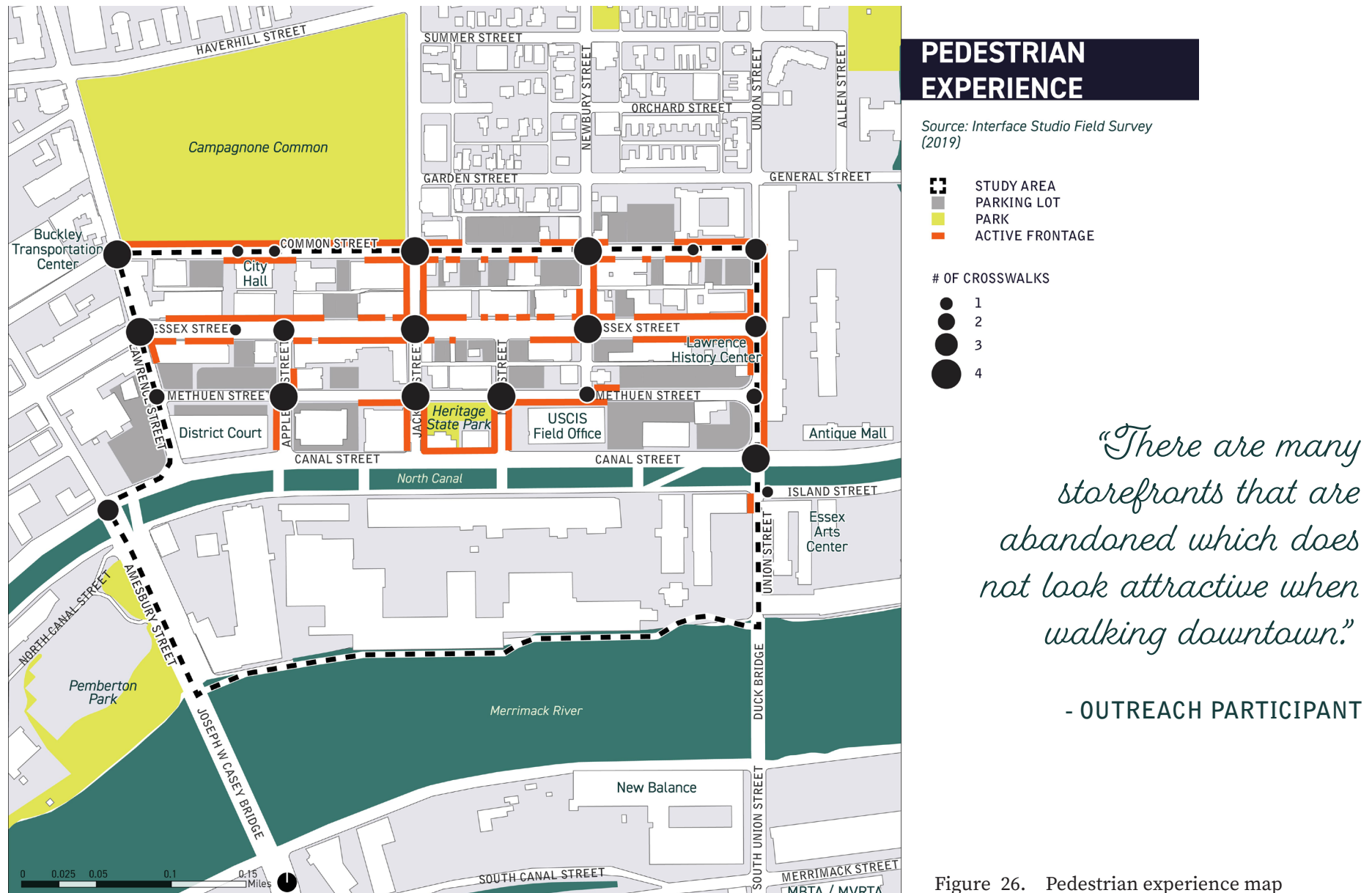


Figure 26. Pedestrian experience map



OUT-OF-DATE SIGNS



INACTIVE STOREFRONTS



NEGLECTED STREET AMENITIES



CRACKED SIDEWALKS



BETTER WAYS TO DO A-FRAME SIGNS?



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

During the course of the planning process, the project team heard from more than 500 community members about their vision for the future of Downtown Lawrence.

The public engagement process included:

8 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted with public officials, community organizations, local developers, and institutional partners, and consisted of both face-to-face and telephone interviews.

414 Survey Respondents

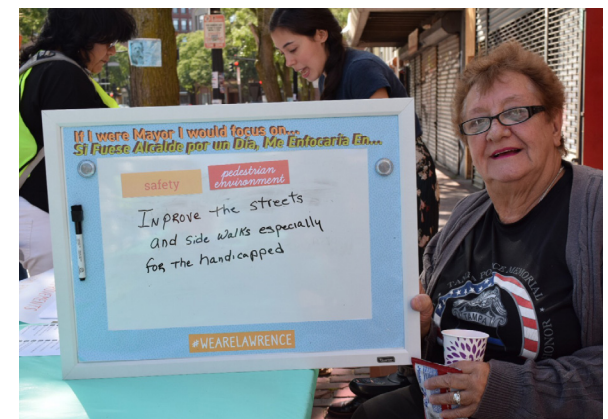
A community survey was fielded from **June to July of 2019** in order to understand how residents, business owners, workers, and visitors perceive Downtown today, and what could make for a better Downtown in the future. The survey was distributed in both English and Spanish language formats, and included online and hardcopy versions. The electronic survey was distributed via **email, the We Are/Somos Lawrence website, word-of-mouth, postcards, and social media channels**. The paper survey was distributed at **key locations and events, including the senior center and farmers market**.

150+ Open House Participants

The public open house was held at two locations between August 25-28, and consisted of a series of activities designed to elicit public response and discussion to a set of key issues facing Downtown, and prompted participants to express their ideas and hopes for Downtown's future. The first location was Lawrence Ciclovía, a popular event that takes place on Essex Street within the study area. The second location was the Lawrence Public Library. In total, more than 150 community members participated in the public open house.

23 Focus Group Participants

Four focus groups were held in October, consisting of city department heads, residents, local developers, and small businesses. The purpose of the focus groups was to generate discussion about specific action strategies for Downtown.



Activities from the Ciclovía Open House

Community Survey

More than 400 people with a connection to downtown Lawrence participated in the survey, including residents, workers, and visitors. Most of the residents who responded moved to Lawrence recently. The relative affordability of housing, proximity to work, and preference for an urban lifestyle were the top reasons cited by residents for choosing to live in Lawrence.

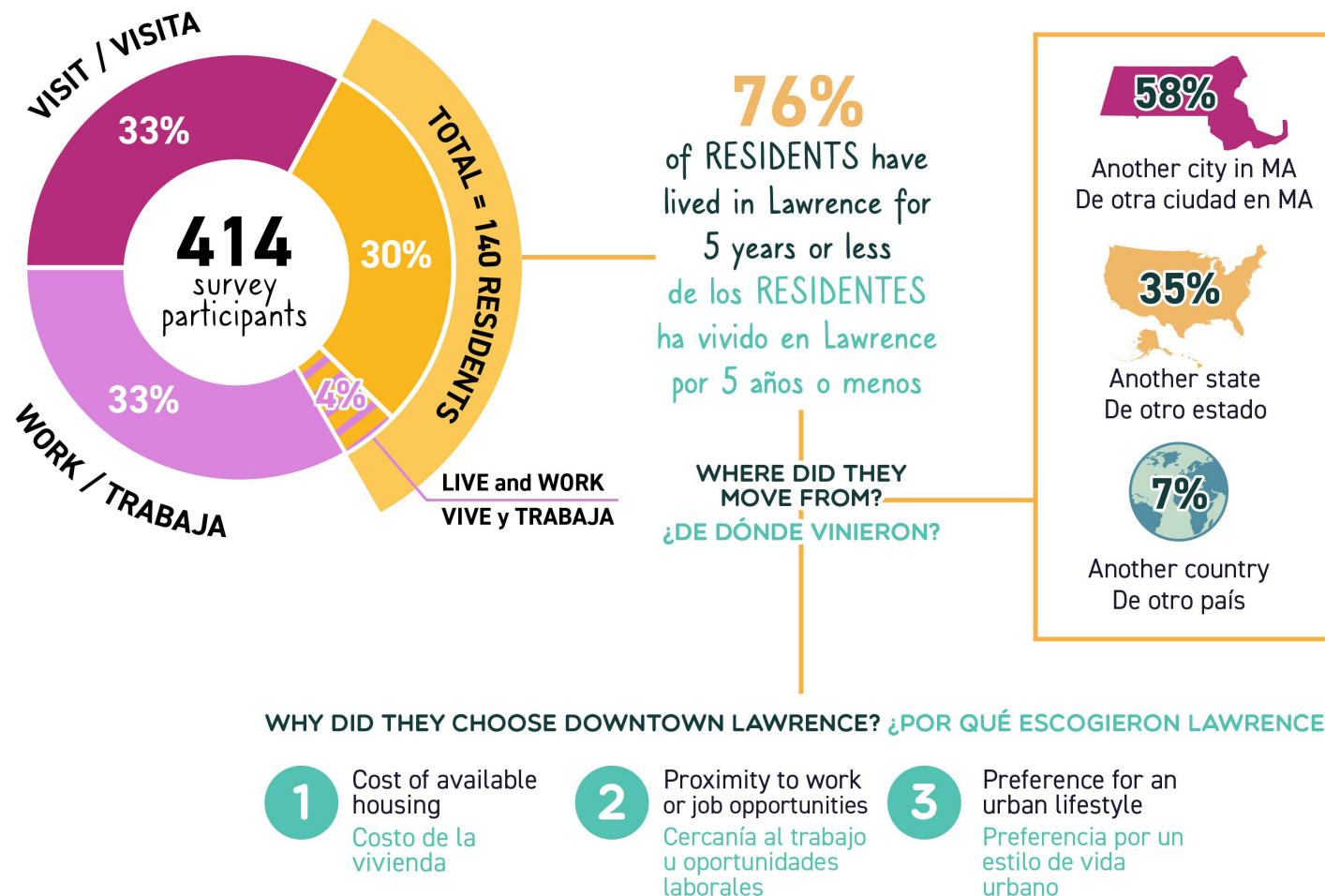


Figure 27. Survey: breakdown of participants

A significant portion of survey respondents indicated that they travel outside of Lawrence to have fun or go shopping. More than two thirds of participants say they go to destinations outside of the City to have fun, and a majority of day-to-day shopping destinations frequented by survey participants are located outside of the City.

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS LIVE? ¿DÓNDE VIVEN LOS ENCUESTADOS?

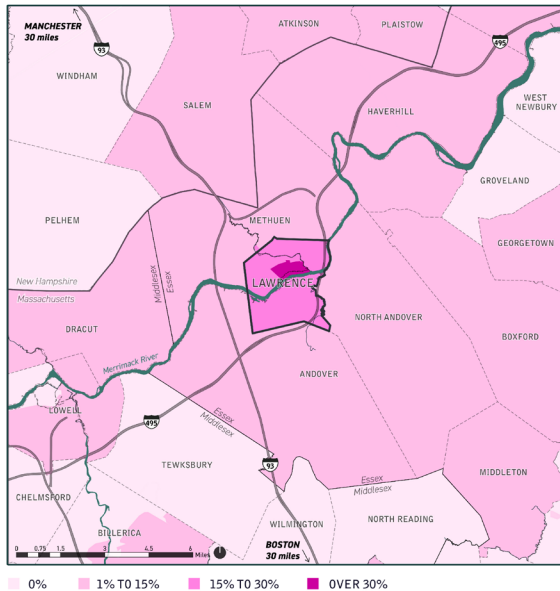


Figure 28. Survey: where participants live

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS WORK? ¿DÓNDE TRABAJAN LOS ENCUESTADOS?

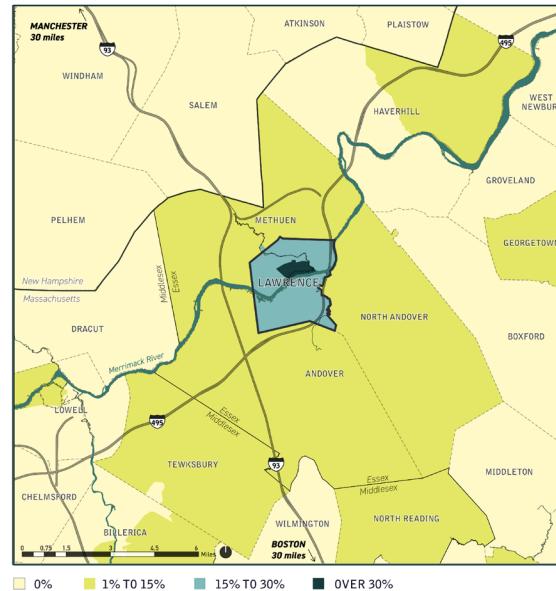


Figure 29. Survey: where participants work

WHERE DO THEY DO THEIR SHOPPING? ¿EN QUÉ LUGAR HACEN SUS COMPRAS?

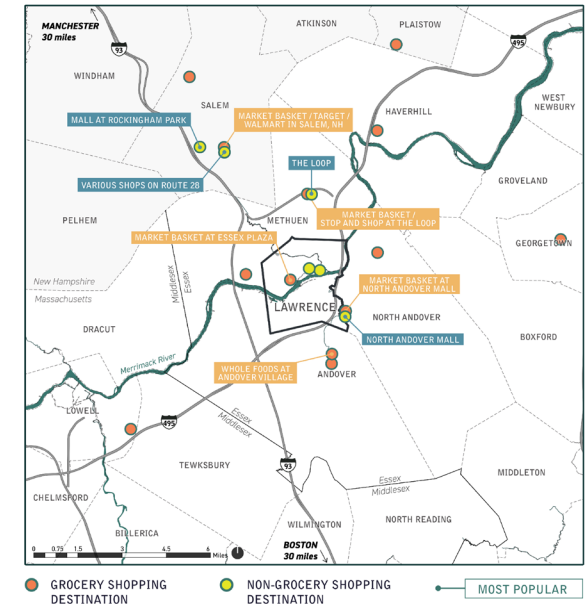


Figure 30. Survey: where participants shop

WHERE DO PARTICIPANTS GO TO HAVE FUN? ¿A DÓNDE VAN LOS ENCUESTADOS PARA DIVERTIRSE?

30% I GO TO DESTINATIONS IN LAWRENCE
VOY A LUGARES EN LAWRENCE

67% I GO TO DESTINATIONS OUTSIDE OF LAWRENCE
VOY A LUGARES FUERA DE LAWRENCE

3% I GO TO OTHER PLACES
VOY A OTROS LUGARES

23% OF PARTICIPANTS INDICATED THAT THEY **SHOP NON-GROCERY ITEMS ONLINE**, MAKING IT THE 3RD MOST VOTED OPTION
DE LOS PARTICIPANTES INDICARON QUE **COMPRAÑ PRODUCTOS DISTINTOS A LOS DE ALIMENTACIÓN POR INTERNET**, HACIÉNDOLA LA TERCERA OPCIÓN MÁS VOTADA

DOWNTOWN LAWRENCE ACTIVATION PLAN | PLAN ESTRATÉGICO PARA EL CENTRO DE LAWRENCE

While residents and workers differed in their responses, there was some overlap: walkability, restaurants/bars, and an easy commute were aspects of Lawrence that participants liked most, and the poor state of cleanliness/attractiveness and concerns about safety were the most disliked characteristics of Downtown Lawrence.

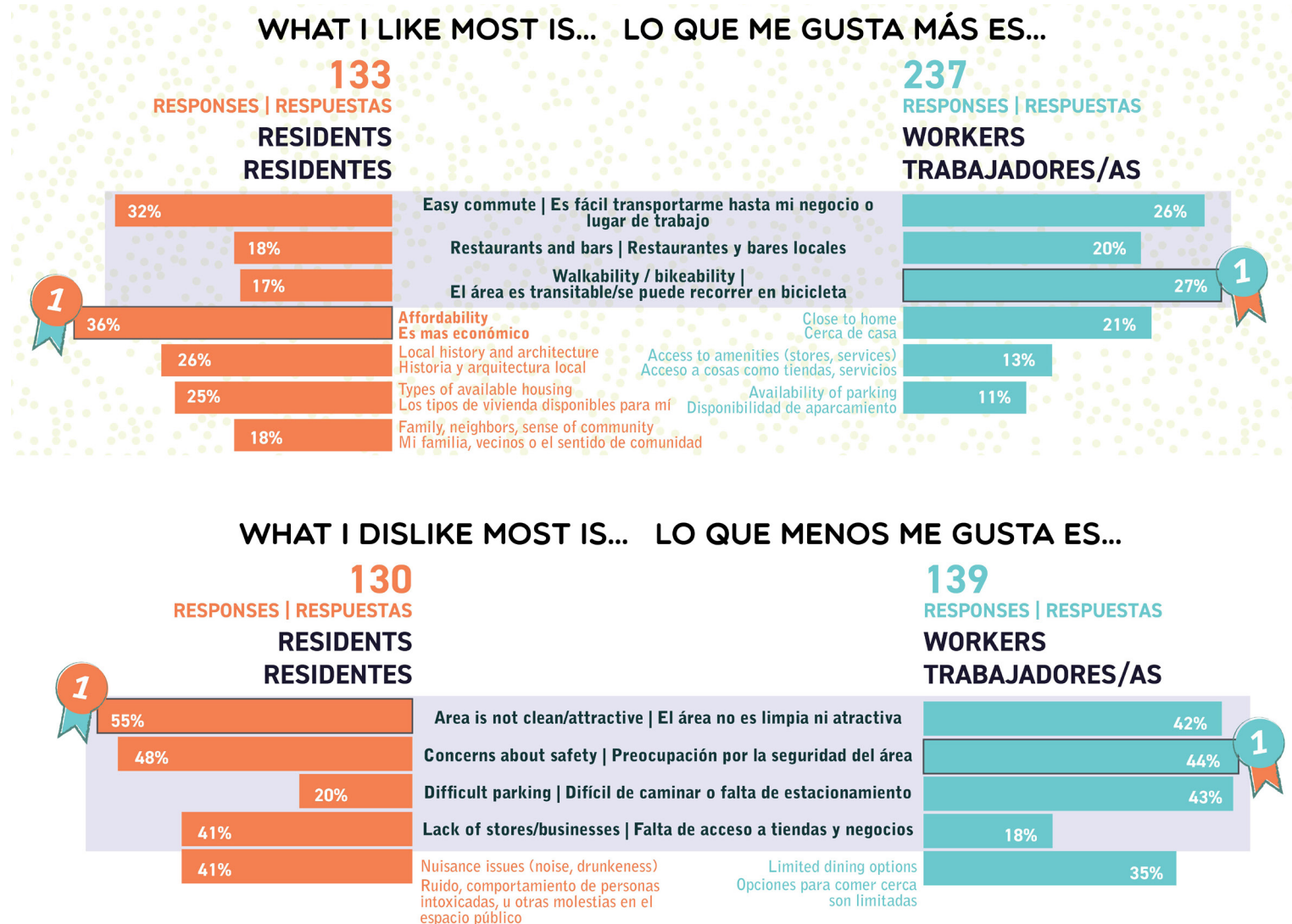


Figure 31. Survey: most liked/disliked about Downtown

Patronizing local restaurants, attending arts, cultural, and special events, and shopping were the top three activities participants said they do Downtown. Visitors tend to participate more regularly in all activities Downtown, with a rate of engagement that is 2 to 3 times higher than that of workers or residents.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES DOWNTOWN?

¿CON CUÁNTA FRECUENCIA REALIZA LAS SIGUIENTES ACTIVIDADES?

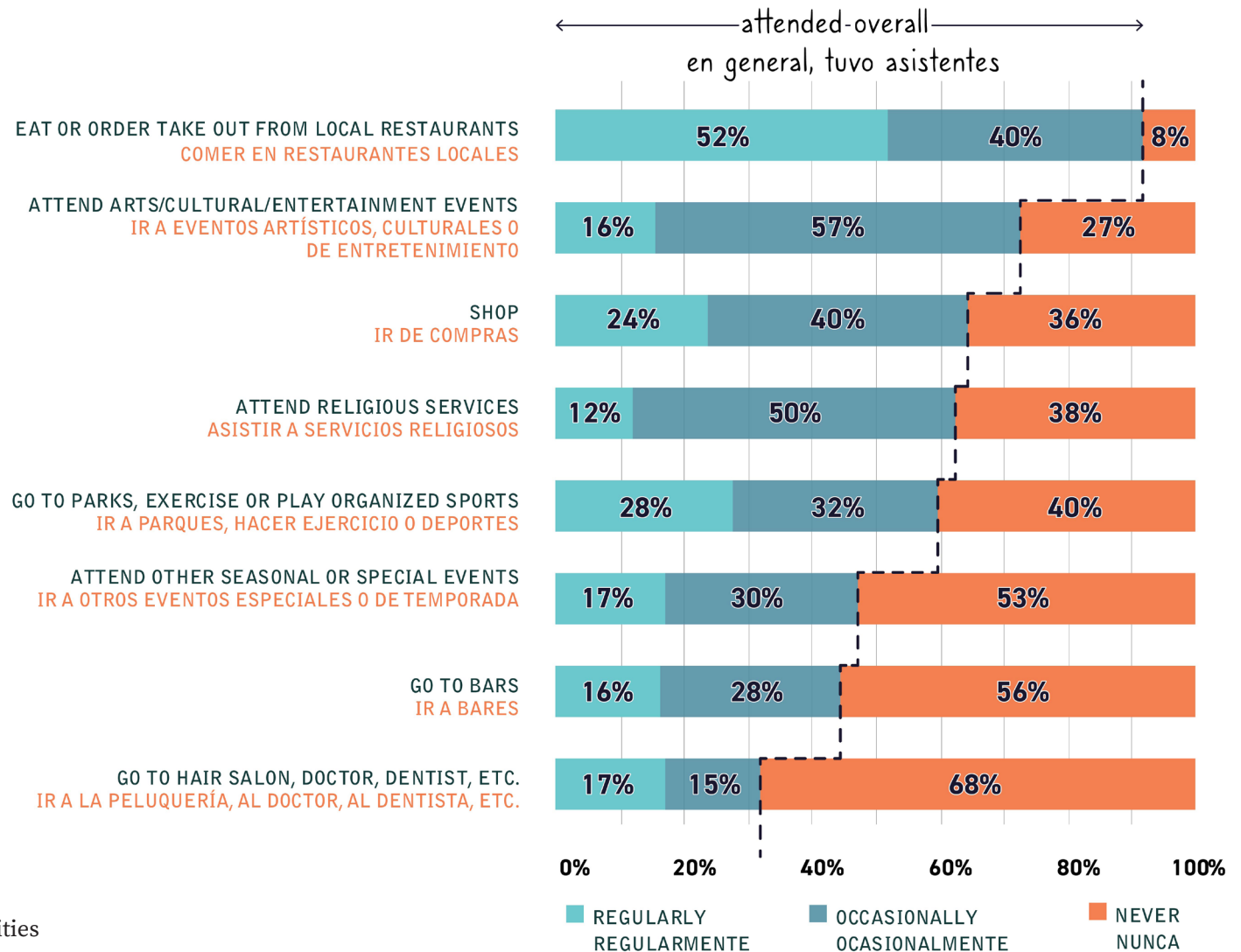


Figure 32. Survey: Downtown activities

Open House

Participants chose safety, cleanliness/attractiveness, and a greater variety of businesses as the top 3 things to focus on improving when asked what they would focus on if they were Mayor for a day.

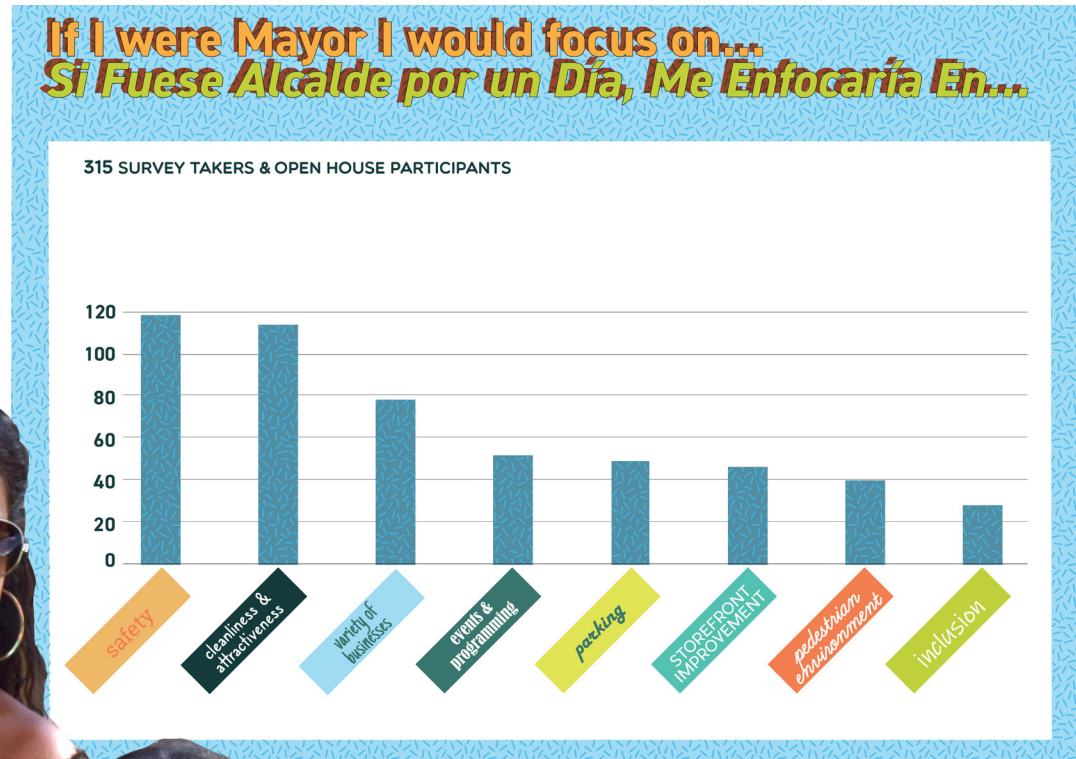
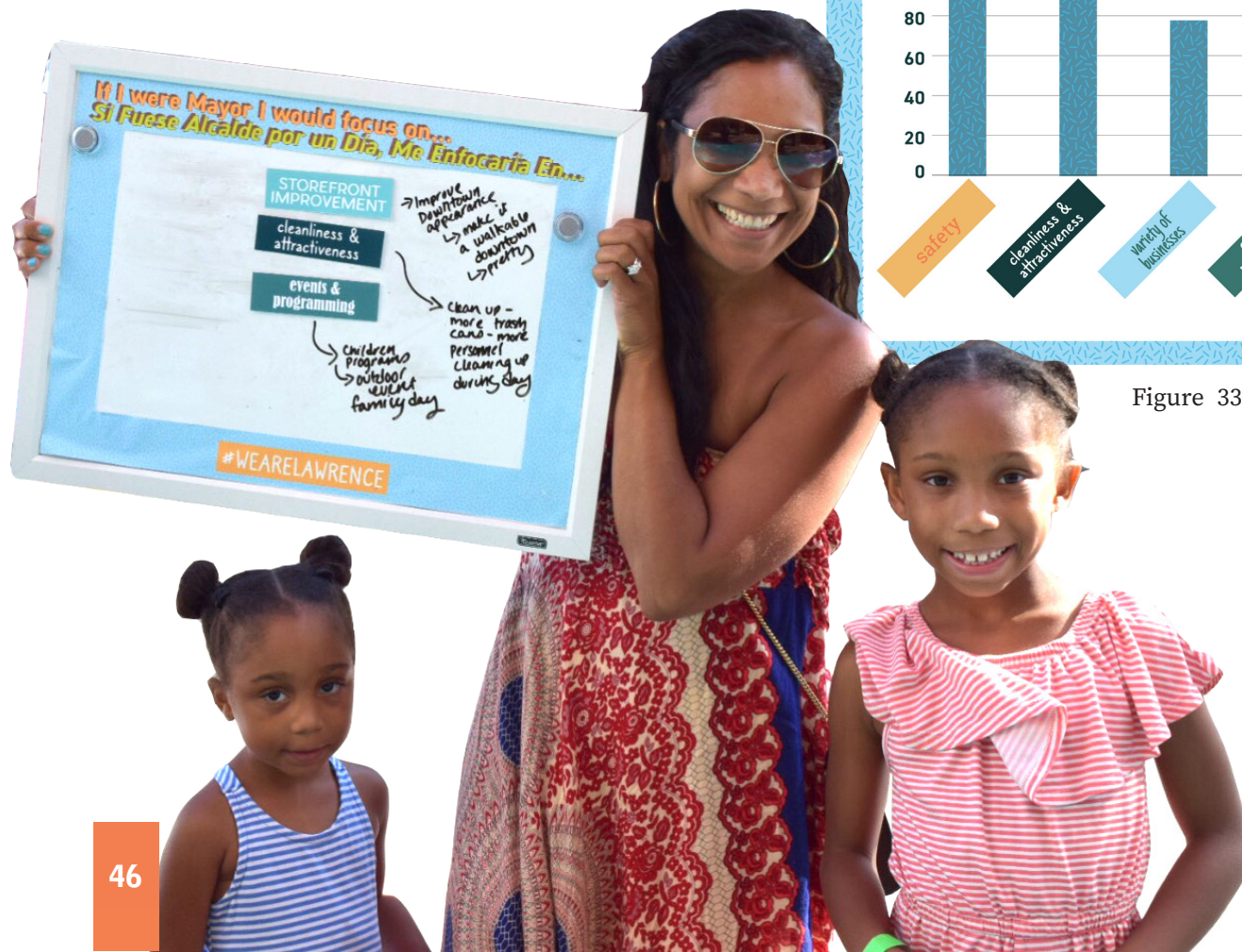


Figure 33. Open house: If I were Mayor I would focus on...

In evaluating Essex Street, participants chose storefront improvements, streetscape and sidewalk improvements, and redevelopment of the vacant bank building at 238 Essex Street as the top three places to spend money on improvements.

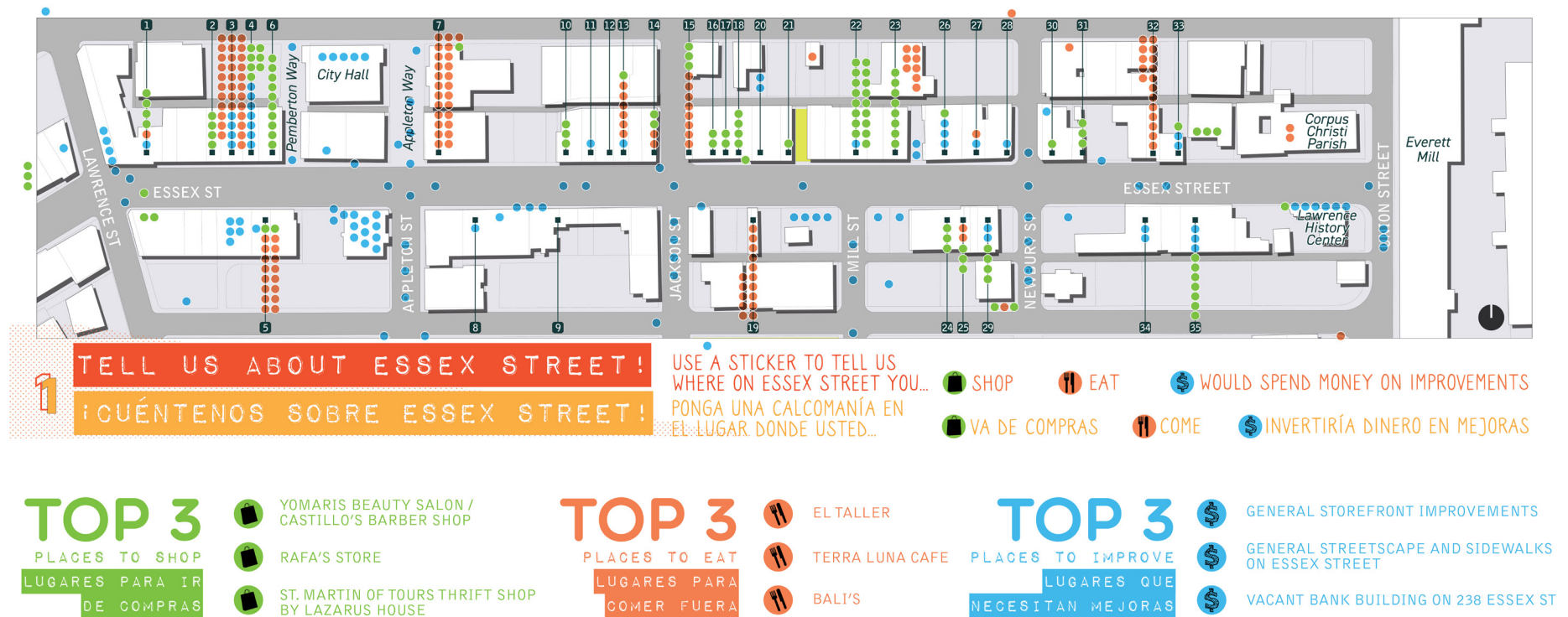


Figure 34. Open house: Tell us about Essex Street

Participants favored activating the canal by creating a series of mini-parks, programming plazas, and illuminating bridges.

Participants chose a variety of programs that would draw different audiences to the plaza throughout the day and evening, including games, concerts, food trucks, outdoor movies, and public art and performances.

Participants also liked the idea of enlivening streets through creative paving and landscaping.

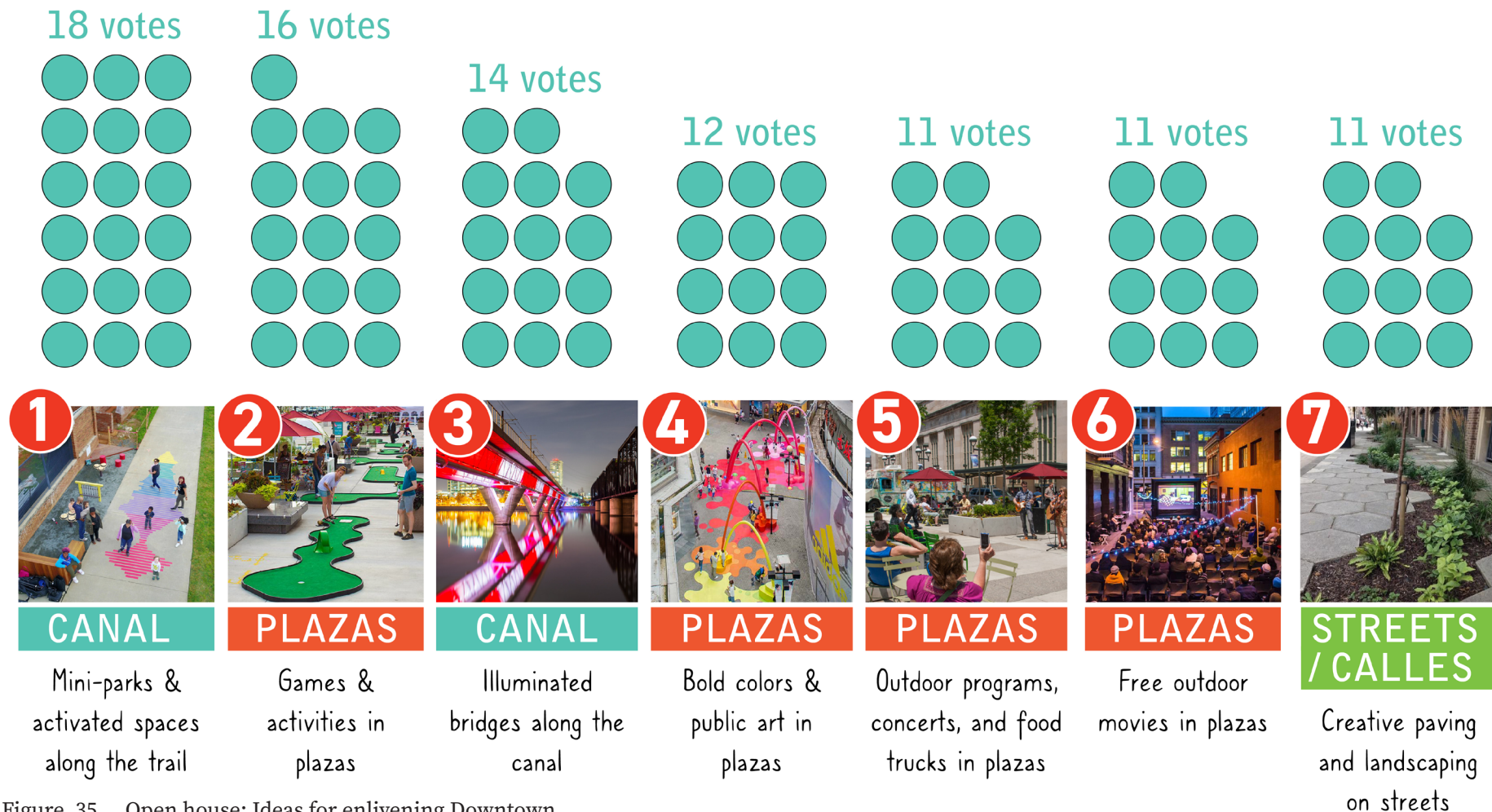
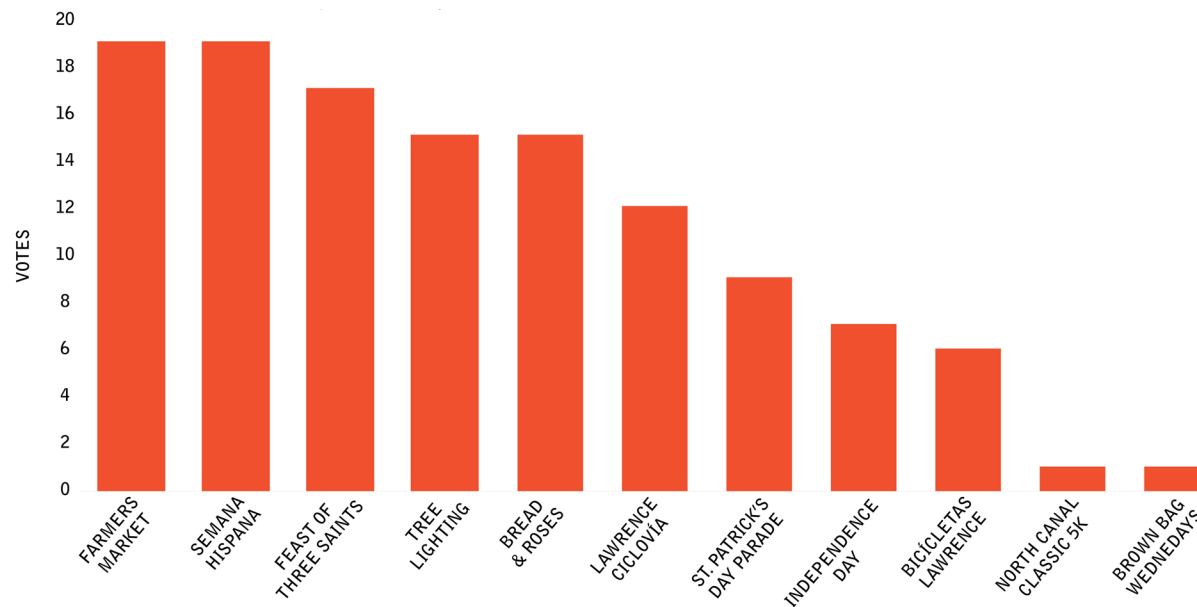


Figure 35. Open house: Ideas for enlivening Downtown

Participants largely indicated that their favorite events were large annual festivals, with the exception of the Groundwork Farmers Market, which is a regularly occurring event in multiple seasons throughout the year. Additional events participants would like to see more of include sports leagues and tournaments, more seasonal activities, music, games, and street festivals.

WHICH EVENTS IN DOWNTOWN LAWRENCE DO YOU ENJOY?



WHAT OTHER KINDS OF EVENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF DOWNTOWN?

"Make farmers market bigger!"

"Domino Tournament"

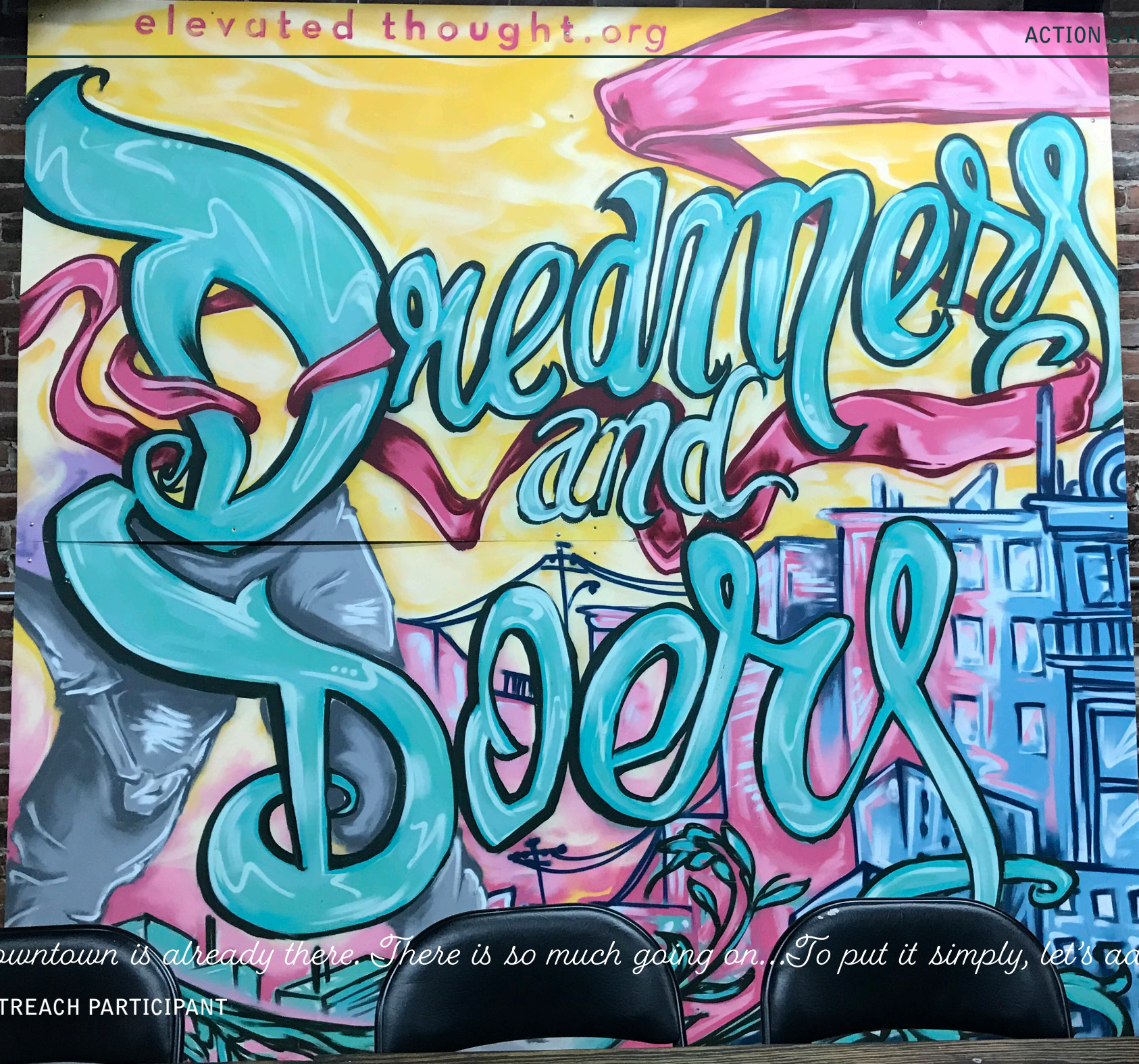
"Bring back dancing in the park!"

"Food competition"

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANTS

Figure 36. Open house: Downtown events

ACTION STRATEGIES



"Downtown is already there. There is so much going on...To put it simply, let's add more."

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

1 *Help Downtown Thrive*

RATIONALE

The main commercial area looks run down and there is a desire for more variety of businesses that would attract more people.

Focusing on curb appeal, diversification of businesses, and partnerships will support businesses and property owners for a Downtown that is clean, attractive and vibrant.

“Increase curb appeal and quality businesses/attractions to improve the city’s reputation.”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Curb appeal strategies will help businesses and property owners improve their exteriors to enhance the overall look and feel of the commercial corridors, strategies include:

- › Storefront improvement grants and design assistance for facades, signage;
- › Technical assistance for branding, marketing and window display;
- › Public art program, such as a commercial corridor artist-in-residence, to spearhead improvement projects, prototype ideas, and engage the community. Such a program could be used to beautify the corridors, through murals and other public art interventions, or provide unique branding/signage to businesses.

Diversification of businesses is important to make Downtown appeal to a broad range of customers and be active day and night, strategies include:

- › Retail recruitment and coordination beginning with an Essex Street catalyst project (as recommended in

the Urban Renewal Plan and in the works with the Lawrence Partnership)

- › Vacant storefront program to encourage temporary reuse for installations or pop up stores. This will require providing regulatory relief for temporary occupancy and recruitment. (as recommended in Downtown West Study)

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships will be necessary to help small businesses start up and grow, as well as come together to tackle any issues that arise, strategies include:

- › Small business education and assistance with regard to the approvals process and regulations;
- › Nightlife management in the form of a task force, night mayor or night ambassadors to help mitigate the impacts of night clubs.



Tacony Resident Artist Initiative

PRECEDENT: The Tacony Resident Artist Initiative provided free studio space in a renovated storefront on the commercial corridor, a monthly stipend, and access to funding set aside for civic improvement-focused public art projects on the commercial corridor.

<https://www.visittacony.com/blog/Tacony-Resident-Artist-Initiative%3A-An-artist-driven-civic-improvement-residency%2C-housed-in-a-storefront-library-on-the-Torresdale-Avenue-Commercial-Corridor/261>



Concert poster in Downtown Lawrence

PRECEDENT: Nightlife officials (known as night mayors, directors of nightlife, night economy managers) are emerging in cities with a robust nightlife industry, such as DC, Pittsburgh, and New York, to help liaise between the City, nightlife businesses and community stakeholders. This role tackles issues such as noise, congestion and parking associated with the nighttime economy.

<https://www.citylab.com/life/2018/12/night-mayor-office-of-nightlife-and-culture-washington-dc/573484/>

2 Strengthen Downtown Identity with New Signage

RATIONALE

A branding strategy will make Downtown more attractive and user friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Forge a Downtown identity through new signage. Three main types of signage have been identified. Wayfinding with a map of Downtown and attractions can help visitors navigate the area and be aware of what there is to see. These signs can be free standing or attached to existing street furniture such as lamp posts depending on the location. Heritage trail signs are a great way to highlight Lawrence history. The existing The Path/El Sendero signs can be refreshed and expanded upon. Finally, parking signs as part of a Downtown parking strategy will help improve the visitor experience.

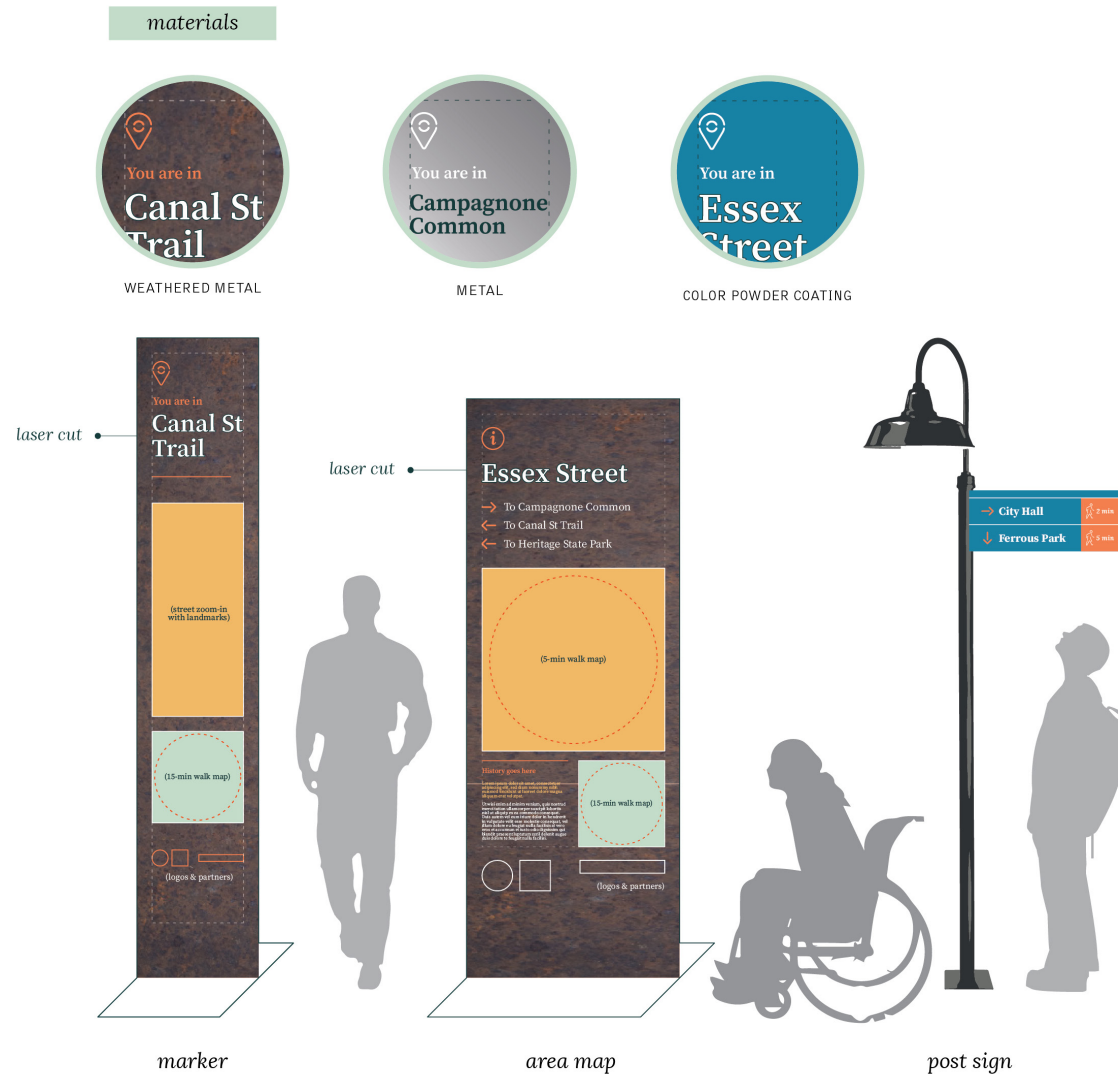


Figure 37. Wayfinding sign examples

Downtown Lawrence

STREET SIGNAGE | SEÑALIZACIÓN DE LA CALLE



Figure 38: Rendering of wayfinding signage along Canal Street

3 Launch Summer Series Weekly Programming at Various Sites

RATIONALE

While Downtown hosts a number of large-scale annual events that draw visitors from around the region, there are few regular events for a more local audience that could do much to encourage consistent activity.

“More regular community events”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

“Provide more performance spaces for artists to express themselves.”

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended the City and its partners **launch a pilot series of weekly events**

Downtown that incorporate and build off existing summer events that can all be marketed under a “Summer Series” umbrella. Such a series could be bookended by popular annual events such as Semana Hispana at the start of the season and closing out the summer with the Bread and Roses Labor Day celebration. Weekly outdoor programming in the summer would be a good way to test out a variety of programming in key public spaces to generate more activity. The public process unearthed a variety of ideas including salsa dancing and music, food tastings and tours, kids activities, games, bike rides, and movies to name a few. Temporary street closures, such as occurs with Ciclovia, could also be incorporated on streets such as Appleton Street and Canal Street.

As an example, activities could include:

- › “Arts on Appleton Way” with salsa dancing and music
- › “Friday Night Food Trucks” on Appleton Street like a night market to complement rather than compete with existing food businesses and clubs
- › “Hang Outs at Heritage State Park” such as movie nights, performances
- › “Cardio on Canal” outdoor fitness classes
- › “Downtown Food Tour” at various rotating restaurants
- › A dedicated effort will be needed to organize and sustain activities, and if successful, the program can be expanded to include year-round activities.



Figure 39. Programming opportunities map

Examples of Inclusive Programming



Food tasting events



Domino tournaments



Large-scale activities and games



Make Essex Street A Great Main Street Experience

RATIONALE

Essex Street is subject to speeding and a high number of crashes, particularly involving pedestrians. The traffic circulation due to surrounding one-way streets forces cars onto Essex Street.

Essex Street is the City's main commercial corridor and could be redesigned for greater pedestrian safety and activity. To this end, two initiatives are recommended: a cleaning, greening and beautification program and a right-of-way redesign for multimodal safety.

"Turn one-way streets to two-way streets."

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

"Better traffic enforcement!"

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cleaning, greening, beautification program will focus on the cleanliness and attractiveness of the public realm and combine public services with contributions from the private sector for corridor-wide improvements. Strategies include:

- › sidewalk repair
- › street lights
- › tree planting and maintenance targeting empty tree pits
- › daily cleaning
- › decorative lighting
- › planters and maintenance

Right-of-way redesign is important for traffic calming and multimodal safety. Strategies include:

- › Right-of-way option 1: change one westbound travel lane to two-way cycletrack.
- › Right-of-way option 2: change one westbound travel lane to back-in angled parking. This would add on-street parking to the corridor, almost

doubling it in some places. Although there is a learning curve, backing in the space is easier than backing into a parallel parking space. This option would also allow for curb bumpouts at intersections, decreasing the pedestrian crossing distance. Raised crosswalks are another improvement that can make pedestrians more visible.

- › As prior plans have recommended, Common, Lawrence, and Amesbury Streets should be converted to two-way streets to improve Downtown circulation and access which would alleviate traffic on Essex Street and allow for the conversion of one westbound travel lane. (as recommended in Lawrence TBD Urban Renewal Plan, Parking study)

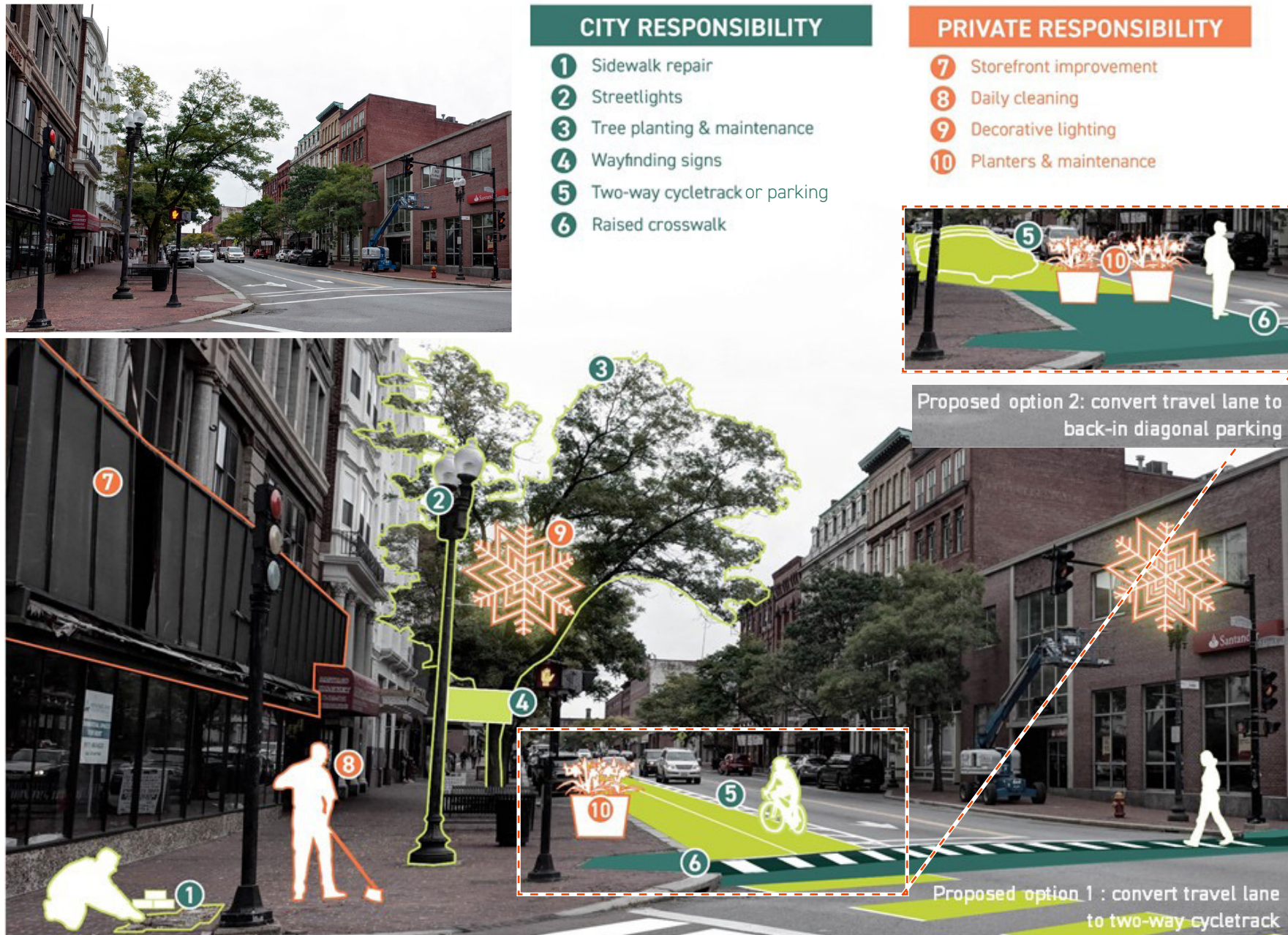


Figure 40. Diagram of potential Essex Street improvements

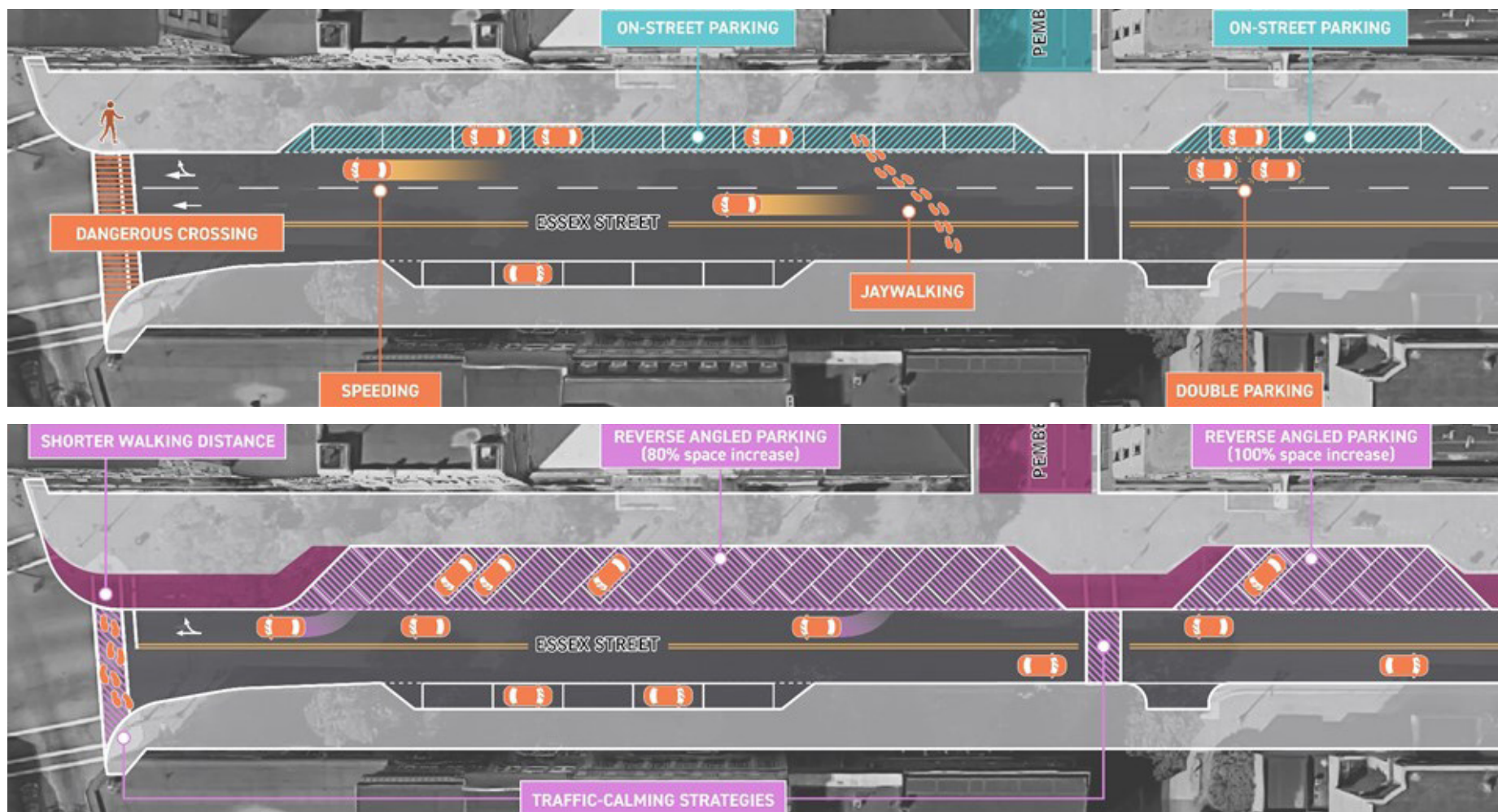
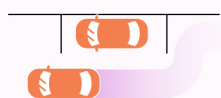


Figure 41. Diagram of potential Essex Street right-of-way reconfiguration

VS.

Parallel Parking



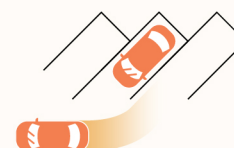
Entering space: 1) signal, 2) stop, 3) back in, 4) straighten out

Exiting space: 1) back up, 2) pull out into travel lane, or 3) inch forward and backward until there is room to pull out

Exiting car: driver exits into traffic lane, risk of “dooring” cyclists

Parking capacity: 22 feet per vehicle

Back-In Angled Parking



Entering space: 1) signal, 2) stop, 3) back in

Exiting space: 1) pull forward into travel lane (better visibility when exiting)

Exiting car: drivers and passengers exit toward sidewalk

Parking capacity: 10-12 feet per vehicle

5 *Reimagine Appleton as a Shared Street for People*

RATIONALE

Appleton Street is two short blocks between Middle Island where hundreds of residents live and the Downtown core on Essex Street, Appleton Way plaza and Campagnone Commons. However, the street is not very active or inviting.

There is an opportunity to create a physical and programmatic link between important Downtown destinations: Middle Island, North Canal, Essex Street, Appleton Way and Campagnone Common. This entails three components: 1) a cleaning, greening and beautification program, 2) public art, and 3) programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cleaning, greening, beautification program as described for Essex Street.

Public art to signal a shift to a more pedestrian-oriented shared street. Strategies include:

- › Colored asphalt on Appleton Street between Essex and Canal Streets in the near term with the potential to invest in more intensive treatment such as decorative paving in the future if successful
- › Murals or sculpture on sites along Appleton including the parking garage, District Court plaza, and back of the bank building.

Programming to generate activity in an area that has a significant number of residents and workers nearby. Appleton Street is a good site for Summer Series activities and temporary street closure for events.



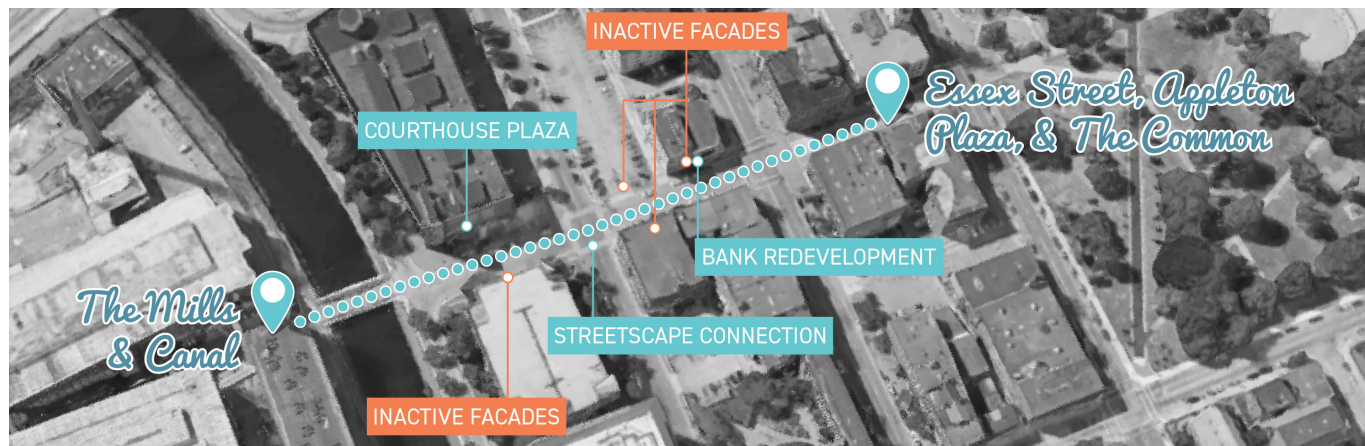


Figure 42. Diagram of issues and opportunities on Appleton



64

6 Expand and Program Canal Trail as Fitness and Heritage Trail

RATIONALE

The North Canal occupies an important place in the history of Lawrence and is a unique, though underutilized, asset. The North Canal also sits along the seam of two distinct geographies, the Essex Street commercial corridor and the growing residential and commercial communities on Middle Island in the old mill buildings. By activating the North Canal through physical improvements and programming, the City can foster a more connected Downtown and leverage a unique amenity to spur further growth and economic development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City and its partners should improve conditions along the North Canal in phases, starting with a series of pilot improvements that can be accomplished in the short-term, followed by long-term capital improvements to the trail.

Pilot improvements can focus on programming and light physical improvements. Programming could include a focus on group fitness classes with the goal of building community around health and creating better connections across Downtown. Physical improvements could include asphalt art, art installations along

the existing fence that explore the Canal's history, and artistic lighting that builds on the recent Illuminacion Lawrence event.

Long-term, the City, State and partners should renovate and widen the trail to allow space for active recreation and seating, punctuated by wider plazas that project over the canal at key locations along the trail.

"The greatest and under-used asset in the city is the canal and dam infrastructure. The City should make every effort to take control of the North Canal from Enel and develop it as an entry to and destination for the city."

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT





Figure 44. Diagram of Canal Street issues



Figure 45. Rendering of Canal Street pilot opportunities - day and night



Figure 46. Rendering of Canal Street long-term interventions

7 *Design Safe and Visually Impactful Gateway Intersections*

RATIONALE

The intersections at Union and Canal Streets and Amesbury and Canal Streets are both important gateways that carry traffic Downtown, but also dangerous intersections identified as MassDOT top 5% crash clusters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These intersections can be redesigned to improve safety and also increase their visibility as a gateway. Interventions such as curb extensions to decrease crossing distance, raised and painted crosswalks to increase pedestrian visibility, and pedestrian signaling should be considered. In the example of Union and Canal, the wide turn radius needed to accommodate trucks can be mitigated by using painted curb extensions to square off the intersection. The curb extensions will encourage cars to make tighter turns, but they will still allow trucks to make wider turns. A feasibility study and data collection would be necessary first steps to improving these intersections.





Figure 47. Diagram of issues at intersection of Union and Canal Streets



Figure 48. Diagram of proposed safety improvements at intersection of Union and Canal Streets

Painted Curb Extension

Pedestrian Scramble

8 *Make Downtown a Great Place to Live*

RATIONALE

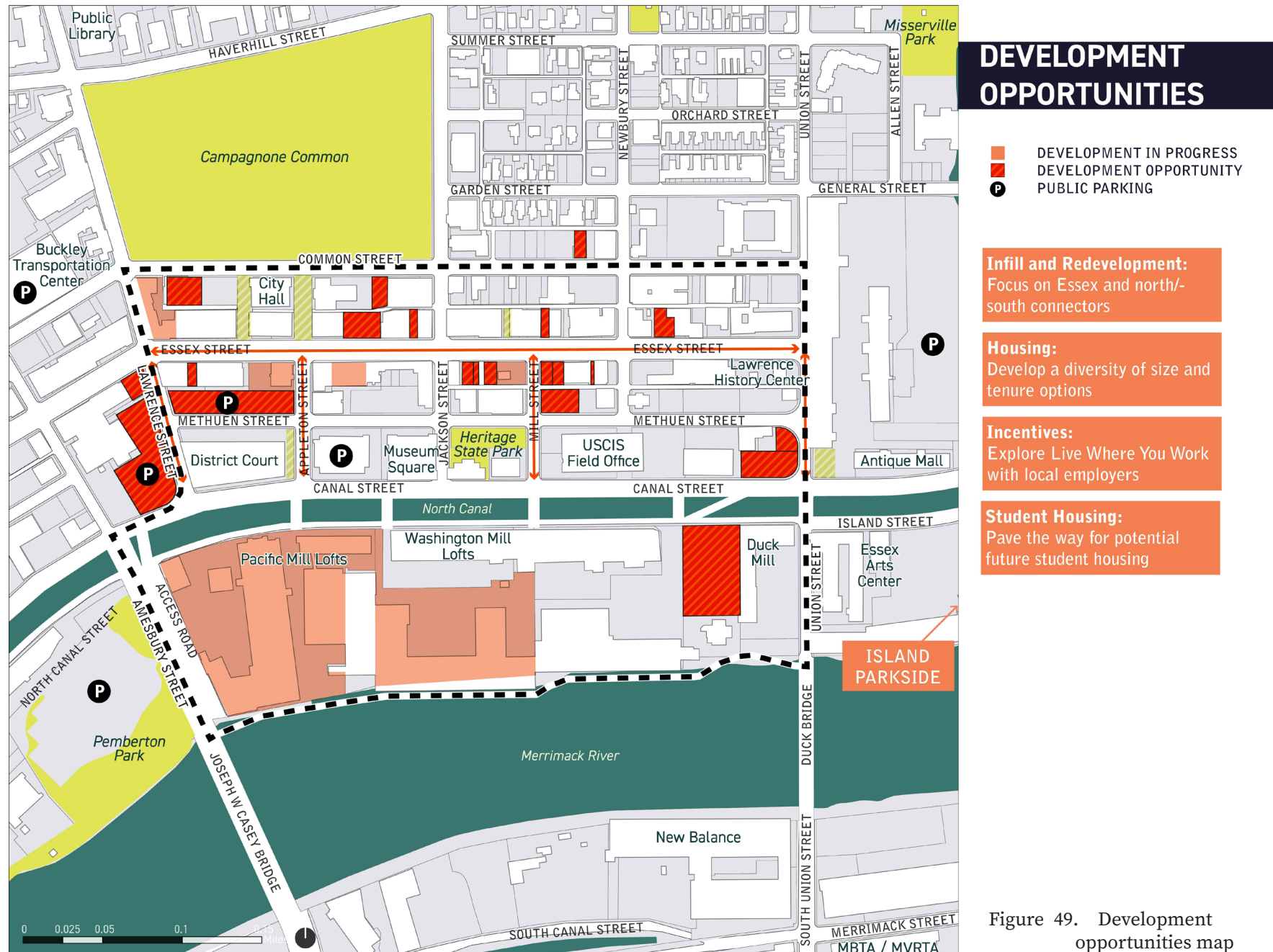
Downtown is emerging as a residential neighborhood and is surrounded by major employers and institutions that could be encouraged to promote Downtown as a place to live. More residents will support more businesses and activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The conversion of the Middle Island mill buildings to new residential and commercial space is almost complete, which has added hundreds of new residents. There are still opportunities to fill in the gaps Downtown with mixed use development that includes housing with a diversity in size and tenure options. Incentives can be explored to encourage employees of Downtown employers to live closer to their work.

Additionally, the growth of educational institutions in and around Downtown brings the possibility of student housing. A primary focus of infill and redevelopment should be creating continuous active frontage on Essex Street and north-south connector streets. This will necessitate a parking strategy to concentrate parking and unlock underutilized surface lots on these streets.





9 *Coordinate Downtown Marketing*

RATIONALE

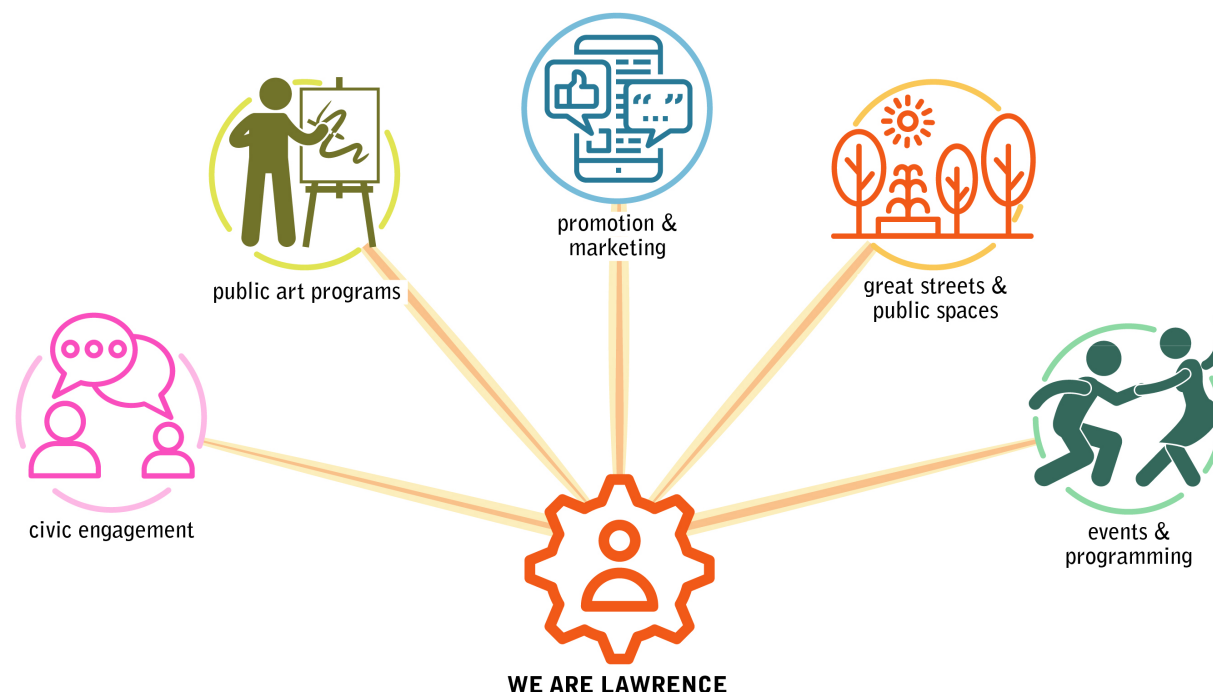
There is a lot happening Downtown and momentum is continuing to build, but a negative perception of Downtown and Lawrence is still a barrier for attracting visitors, shoppers, businesses, and residents.

spaces, and businesses. This will ensure that Downtown has the place-based assets to host programs and events, and that Downtown Lawrence creates a positive first impression when visitors come Downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordinate a Downtown marketing strategy that draws visitors locally and throughout the region. The City of Lawrence has already begun to take action on this by creating a centralized marketing initiative called We Are / Somos Lawrence, which consists of website and social media channels with a community calendar, storytelling effort, and information about special events or issues. These efforts are helpful both to promote events to a wide audience, but also to help counter negative perceptions by highlighting positive things happening in the City.

The marketing effort should be done in coordination with efforts to program Downtown and improve streets, public



10 *Make Sure Regulations Support the Downtown Vision*

RATIONALE

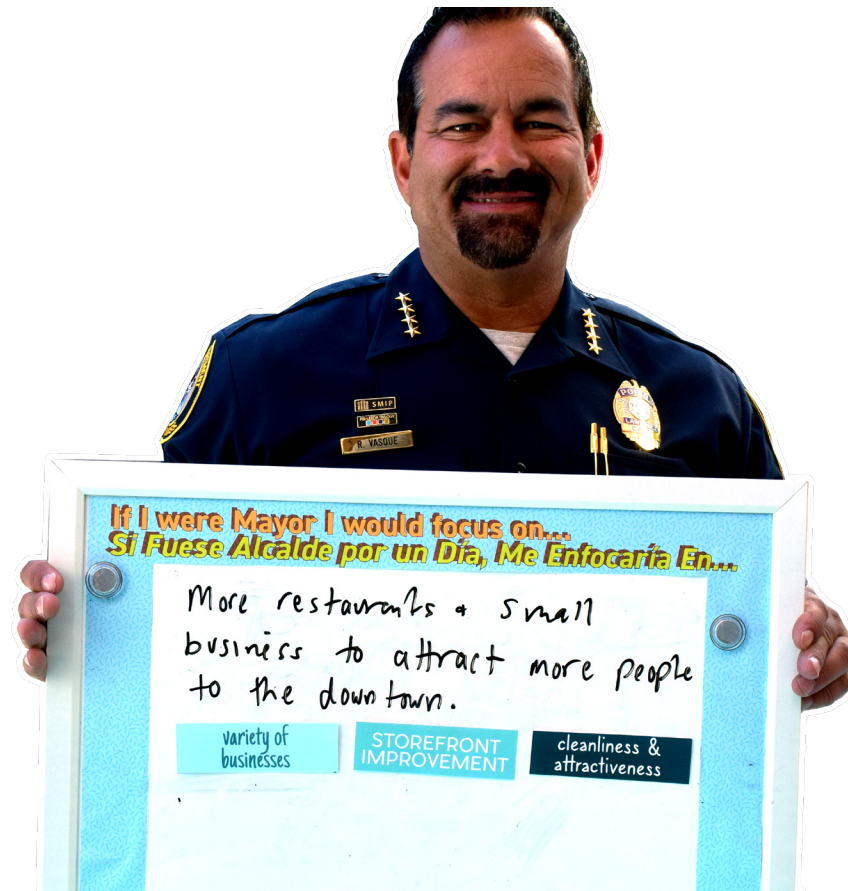
The City needs to ensure that the regulatory structure and process is aligned with the Downtown vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

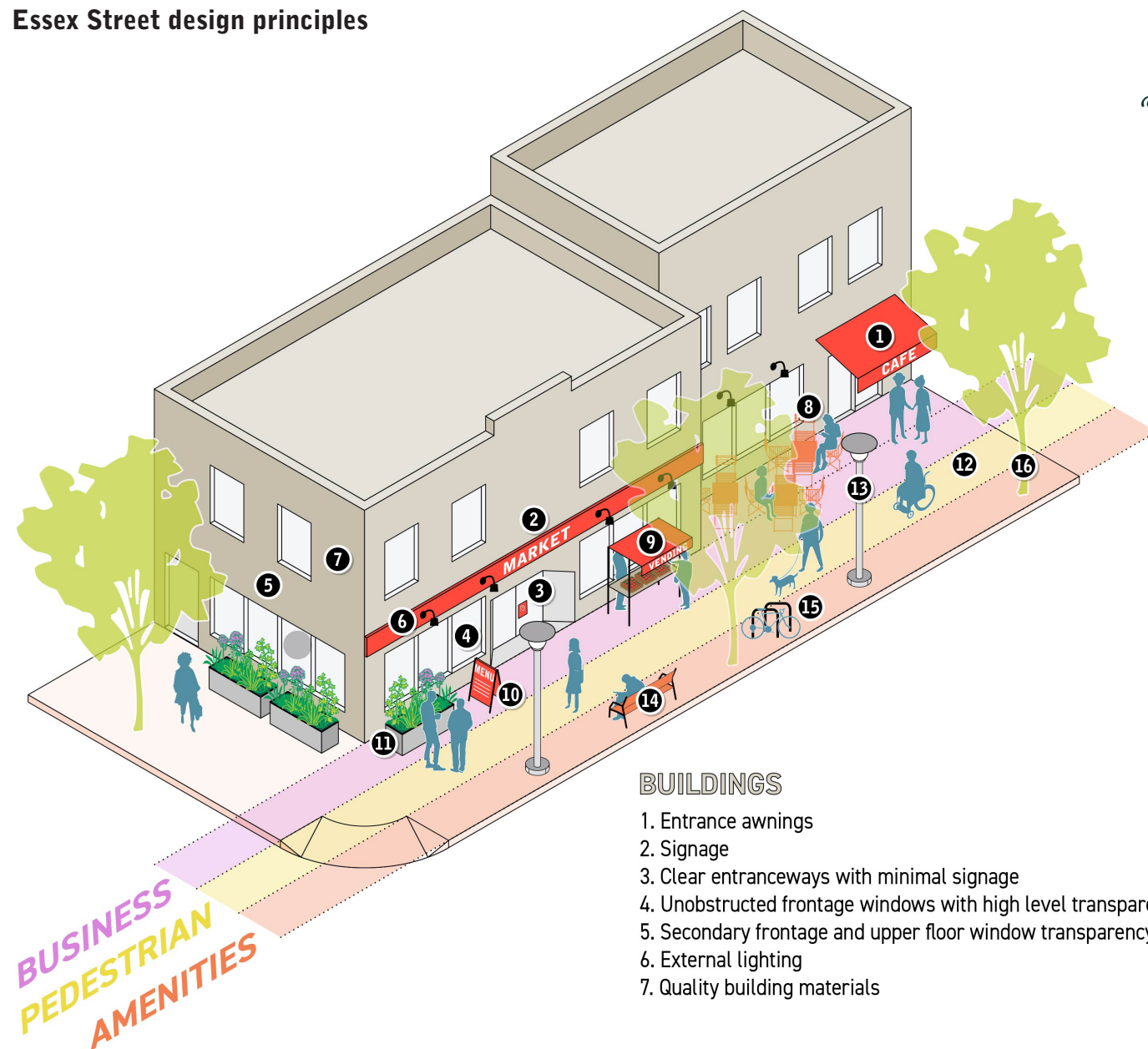
The City should **encourage development consistent with the principles of the Downtown Smart Growth Overlay (DSGO)**. While the design guidelines in the DSGO are calibrated to produce good urban development, the overlay currently allows the applicant to choose between either the underlying zoning or the overlay when seeking approval. Thus, a property owner or developer could forgo following the guidelines if they do not see an incentive to following the DSGO, or if they see the DSGO requirements as too burdensome. By either revising portions of the underlying zoning to be consistent with the DSGO, or by editing the DSGO to incentivize use of the overlay, the City can encourage use of the design guidelines.

The City can further encourage good urban development by **revising parking minimums** to reduce overly onerous parking requirements, in coordination with exploring a **shared parking structure** and consolidation of underused lots as recommended in the parking study. Shared parking is currently allowed under certain circumstances in the City's zoning code.

The City should also create a **standardized permitting process** that is easier and more predictable for programming partners, non-profits, and small businesses to navigate. This could take the form of a set of standard permit applications for things such as outdoor seating and events that are approved by an entity within City government.



Essex Street design principles



*“Revamp Essex Street
facades.”*

- OUTREACH PARTICIPANT

BUSINESS ZONE

- 8. Cafe seating
- 9. Outdoor vending display
- 10. A-frame signage
- 11. Planters

PEDESTRIAN ZONE

- 12. Pedestrian clearance

AMENITIES ZONE

- 13. Pedestrian-scaled street lighting
- 14. Benches
- 15. Bike racks
- 16. Street trees

BUILDINGS

- 1. Entrance awnings
- 2. Signage
- 3. Clear entranceways with minimal signage
- 4. Unobstructed frontage windows with high level transparency
- 5. Secondary frontage and upper floor window transparency
- 6. External lighting
- 7. Quality building materials

Figure 50. Diagram of design principles and guidelines for Essex Street

IMPLEMENTATION

Partners

Implementation will require leadership from the City but also collaboration with the Lawrence Partnership and other government, nonprofit and private sector partners. These partners will prioritize the recommendations and determine timeframes as implementation moves forward.

Priorities for Early Action

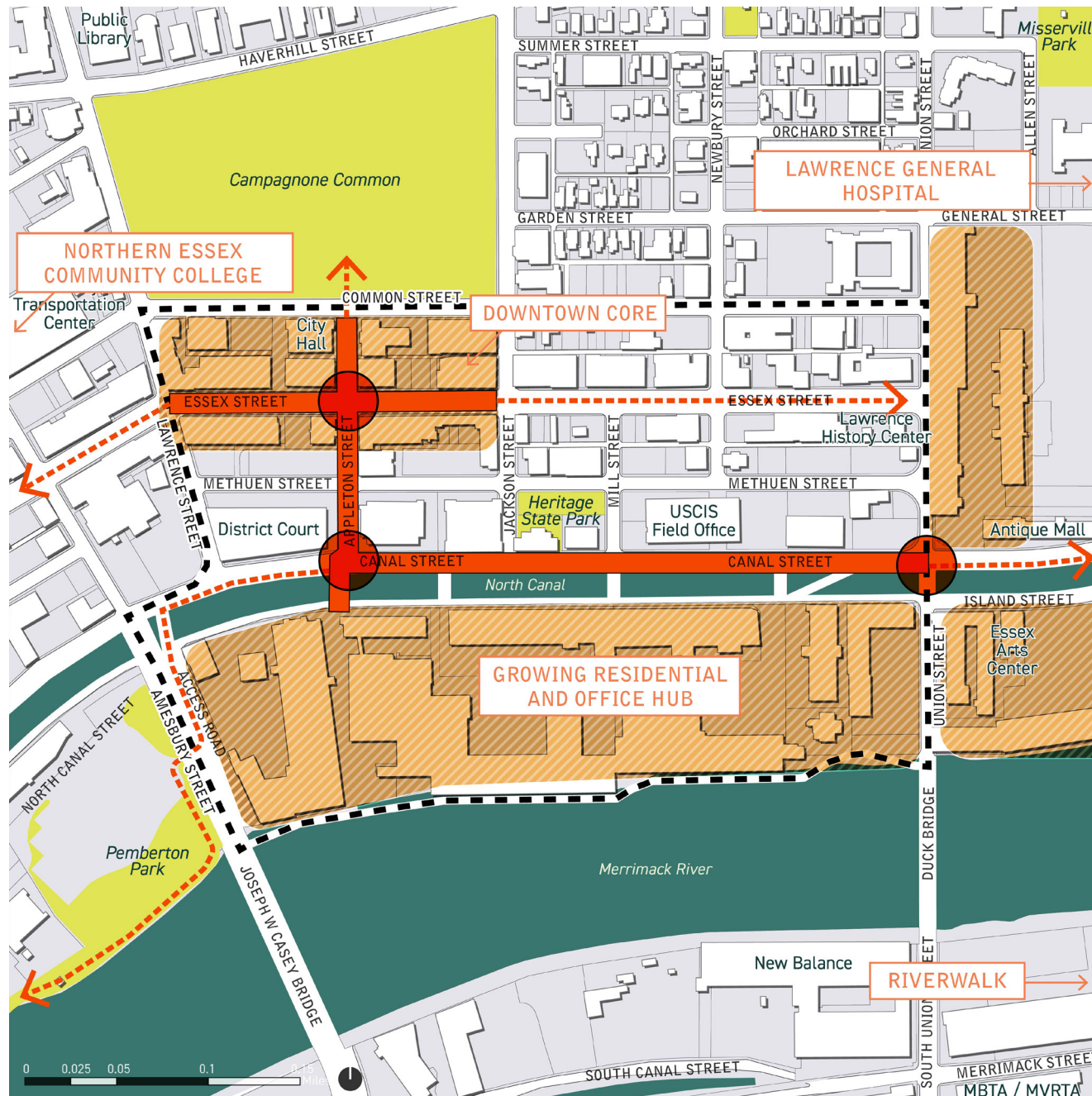
While some recommendations in this plan are longer-term, requiring intensive coordination and fundraising, others can be accomplished relatively quickly. In evaluating these types of projects for early action implementation, their feasibility and level of impact were key considerations.



Three main projects were determined to be priority projects to be implemented in the coming year:

- › Wayfinding signage
- › Summer Series weekly programming
- › Canal fitness and heritage trail

These early actions should be focused on Canal Street, Appleton Street and Essex Street to connect main hubs of activity as illustrated in the map on the following page.



CONNECTING ACTIVITY HUBS

