

# Downtown Action Strategy

CITY OF PITTSBURGH / URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY / DOWNTOWN RETAIL TASK FORCE

Stantec Architecture Inc

Wall-to-Wall Studios

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## Chapter 1

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# Introduction

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As the City of Pittsburgh moves through its Third Renaissance, the Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Office of the Mayor, under the guidance of the Downtown Retail Task Force, look to enhance the retail experience in the City by creating a new image for Downtown retail and enhancing Pittsburgh's safe and walkable streets.

“Recommendations in the Downtown Action Strategy can continue helping transform Downtown into a superior urban environment, not unlike the Cultural Trust's transformation of a downtrodden area into a world-class Cultural District.”

*Kevin McMahon, President and CEO, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust*



# Building upon the Momentum

## FAST FACTS

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1. There are currently six Fortune 500 companies in Pittsburgh.
2. Downtown office space exceeds 26.3M square feet.
3. Class A occupancy rate is 92.6%.
4. Downtown hosts 126,370 workers.
5. PNC has committed \$700M to City real estate development (excluding the recent purchase of the Lord & Taylor building).
6. Downtown rental units have nearly doubled in the past five years.

The City of Pittsburgh continues to receive accolades from around the world. From “The Most Livable U.S. City” to one of “America’s Most Recession-Resistant Cities for Real Estate” (6th place), Pittsburgh is on the move.

While corporate commercial office space remains the primary driver of Downtown activity, there are many other notable developments that will continue to propel Pittsburgh through its Third Renaissance.

The residential market has increased dramatically over the past five years. The number of rental units has nearly doubled while maintaining an occupancy rate of approximately 95%.

Tourism and entertainment have also thrived. Venues throughout the Cultural District and Pittsburgh’s world-class sports teams have led to an influx of visitors to the region as well as increases to both hotel occupancy rates and the average daily hotel rate.

The City now looks to capitalize on this momentum by investing strategically in the urban landscape, creating an environment that will attract and retain retail as a core component of Downtown Pittsburgh.

## Chapter 2

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# Process

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The City of Pittsburgh, in partnership with the Urban Redevelopment Authority, has established the Downtown Action Strategy Committee to create a three-year action plan aimed at attracting and retaining retail businesses in Downtown Pittsburgh. The task force consists of land owners, businesses, organizations, and public offices.

"As the momentum of Downtown Pittsburgh continues to grow and the Third Renaissance continues, it is perfect timing to have stakeholders work together on a coherent strategy for improving key corridors and public realm spaces that tie the \$5B of investment together."

Robert Rubinstein, Acting Executive Director, Urban Redevelopment Authority



# Downtown Action Strategy

## FAST FACTS - COMMITTEES

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1. Marketing Committee
2. Urban Design Committee
3. Retail Attraction and Retention Committee

The Urban Redevelopment Authority and the Office of the Mayor established some very simple parameters for this initiative:

- The Downtown Action Strategy focuses on improvements that can be implemented over a three-year period.
- Action items include a new branding and marketing campaign, improvements to the built environment, and recommendations for new policies and incentives.
- Three sub-committees were created to focus on key areas: marketing, urban design, and retail attraction and retention.
- Wall-to-Wall Studios was engaged to develop branding solutions.
- Stantec Architecture Inc. was engaged to provide urban design and facilitate committee meetings.

Beginning in January 2012, the Marketing, Urban Design, and Retail Attraction and Retention Committees met on a regular basis to discuss the various elements of the plan. While each Committee focused on a specific task, several goals and guiding principles were established and served as a basis across them all:

1. *Support continued growth towards a 24/7 Downtown.*
2. *Promote collaboration of all stakeholders, public and private. It is essential to the success of the plan.*
3. *Support and encourage unique destination retail, boutique districts, and support services, but also accommodate large-scale retail.*
4. *Provide existing Downtown businesses with access to the resources and services they need to thrive.*
5. *Propose new policies, procedures, and programs aimed at creating a vibrant critical mass.*
6. *Build upon recent successes and \$5B in new investments.*
7. *Develop a plan that can entice locally-owned businesses and restaurants to establish a presence in the City.*
8. *Create opportunities to develop a significant presence of retail and restaurants through localized initiatives.*
9. *Continue supporting amenities that enhance Downtown living.*
10. *Create a unique, safe, and exciting experience.*

## Gallery 2.1 A walkable city



*Several major office buildings house a majority of the City's daytime population. Areas where the walking circles overlap should be considered prime retail location opportunities.*



It should also be noted that the Downtown Action Strategy is not intended to address parking and transportation in detail but it outlines general observations and recommendations in an effort to influence and support other ongoing initiatives.

**Interactive 2.1** Key drivers and opportunities



The Cultural District offers 2,300 performing arts events annually, attracting 2,000,000 audience members.

At Market Square, nearly \$100M of investment is underway including The Gardens at Market Square project.

Smithfield Street retail activity includes Brooks Brothers, Burlington, and Macy's. PNC recently purchased the former Lord & Taylor building for redevelopment, and the Saks Fifth Avenue site, an opportunity for large-scale retail or parking, remains vacant.

Over the last five years, Point Park University has made significant investments in downtown which, together with the Cultural District, bookend the Wood Street corridor.

## Chapter 3

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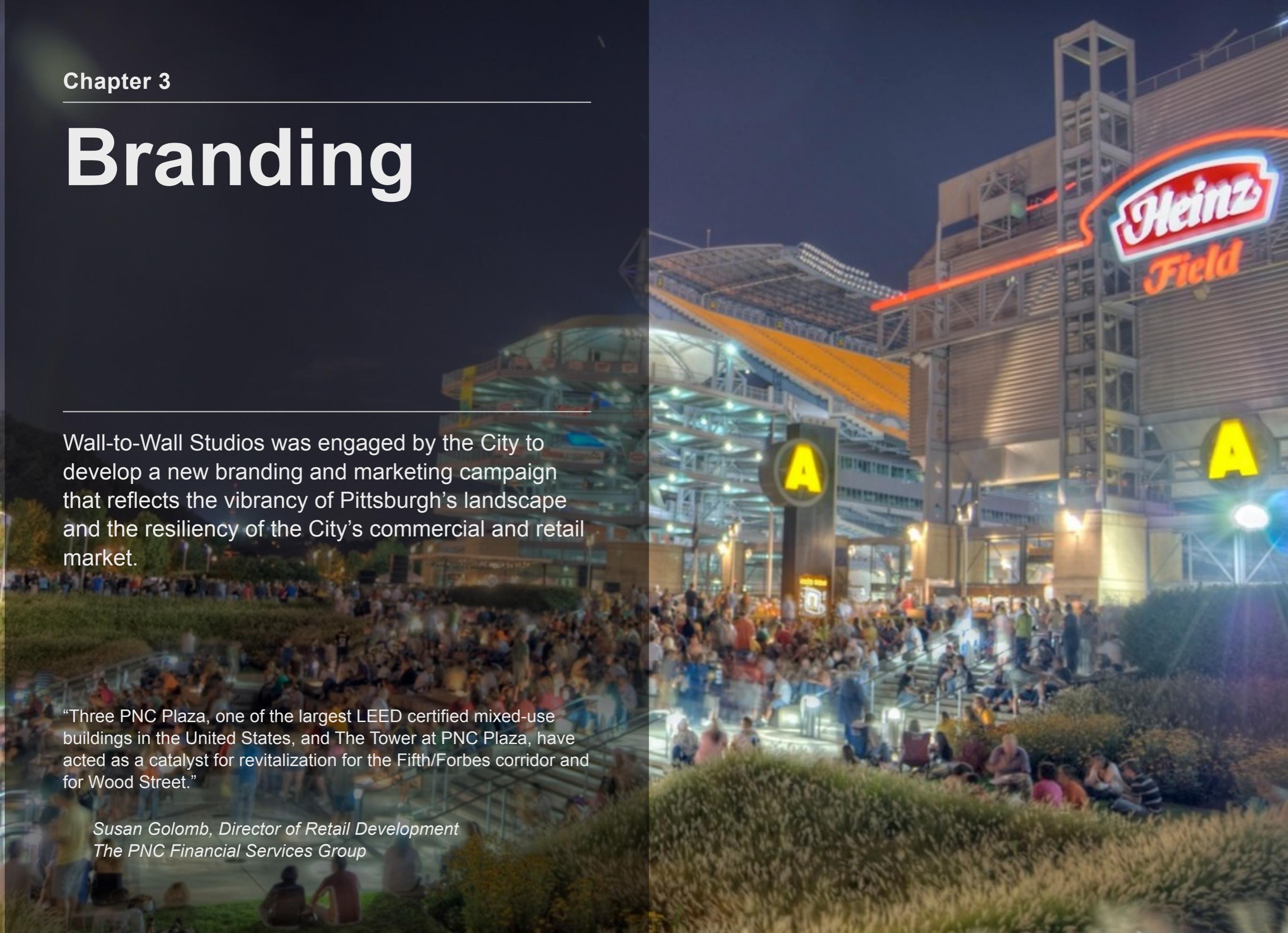
# Branding

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Wall-to-Wall Studios was engaged by the City to develop a new branding and marketing campaign that reflects the vibrancy of Pittsburgh's landscape and the resiliency of the City's commercial and retail market.

“Three PNC Plaza, one of the largest LEED certified mixed-use buildings in the United States, and The Tower at PNC Plaza, have acted as a catalyst for revitalization for the Fifth/Forbes corridor and for Wood Street.”

*Susan Golomb, Director of Retail Development  
The PNC Financial Services Group*



# Brand Campaign

# PITTSBURGH HERE + NOW

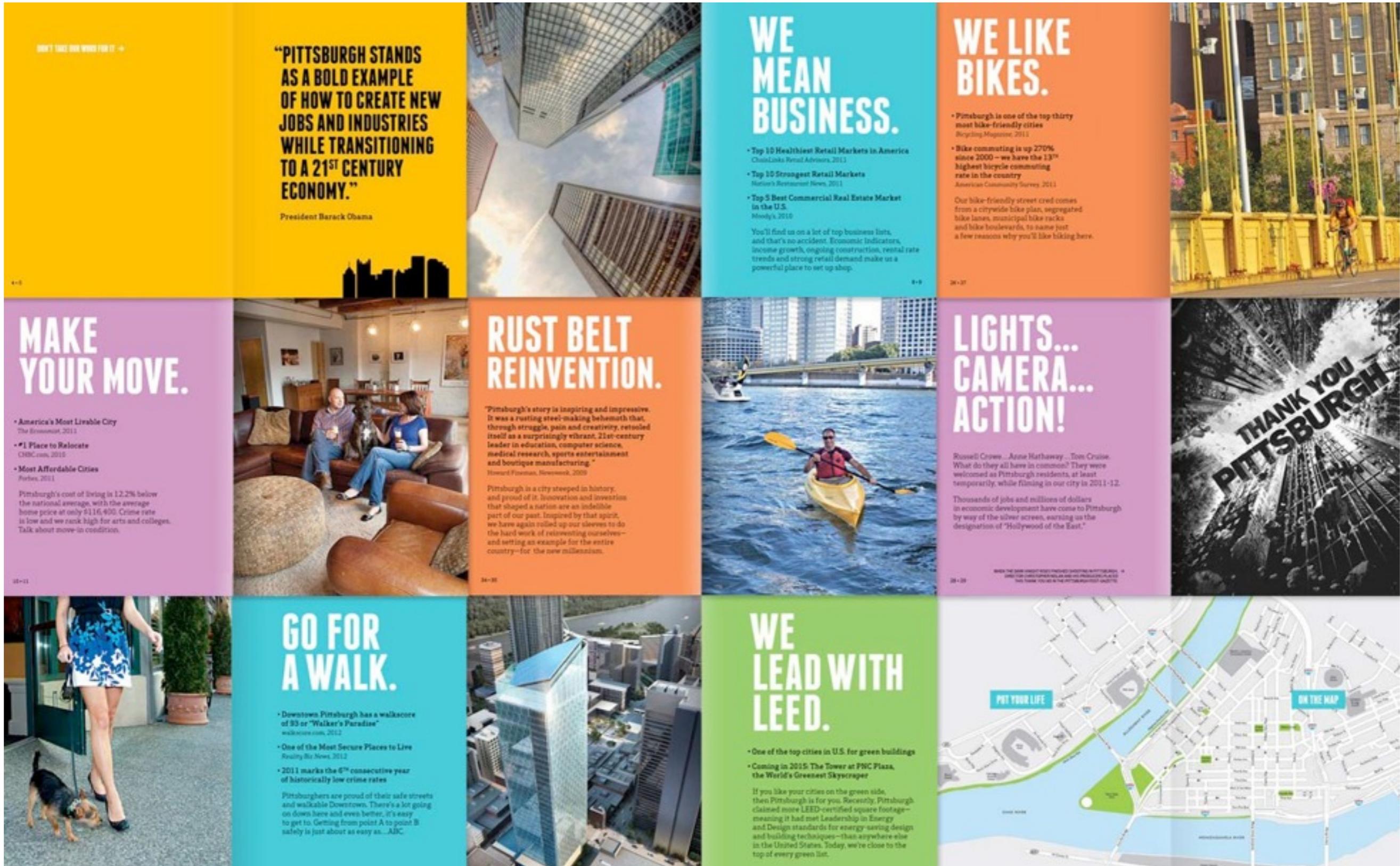


Wall-to-Wall Studios was engaged by the City of Pittsburgh / URA to create a new branding campaign that encapsulates the spirit of Pittsburgh and value of investment in the City, with a particular focus on the Downtown core. The intent of the branding campaign is to leverage the City's greatest assets and showcase the wonderful progress on many fronts. This initiative will help make Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle top-of-mind -- as a place in which to live, to invest and to visit.

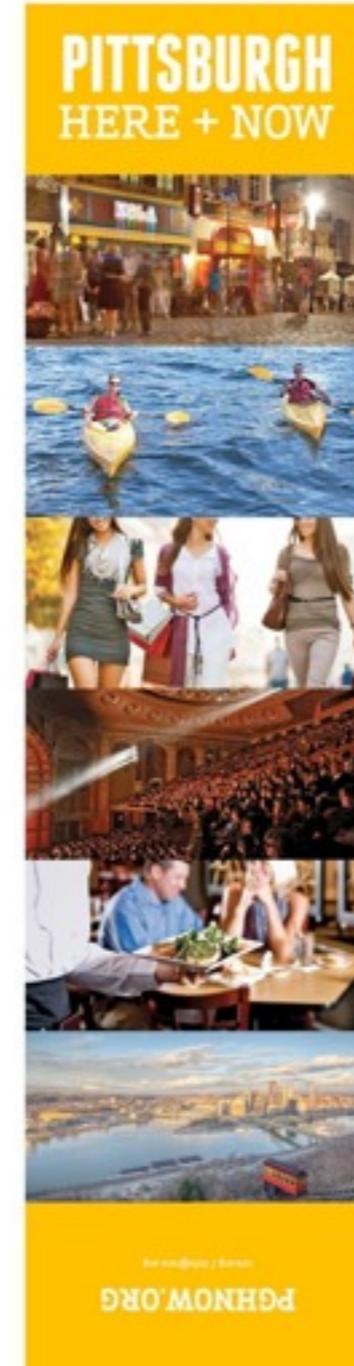
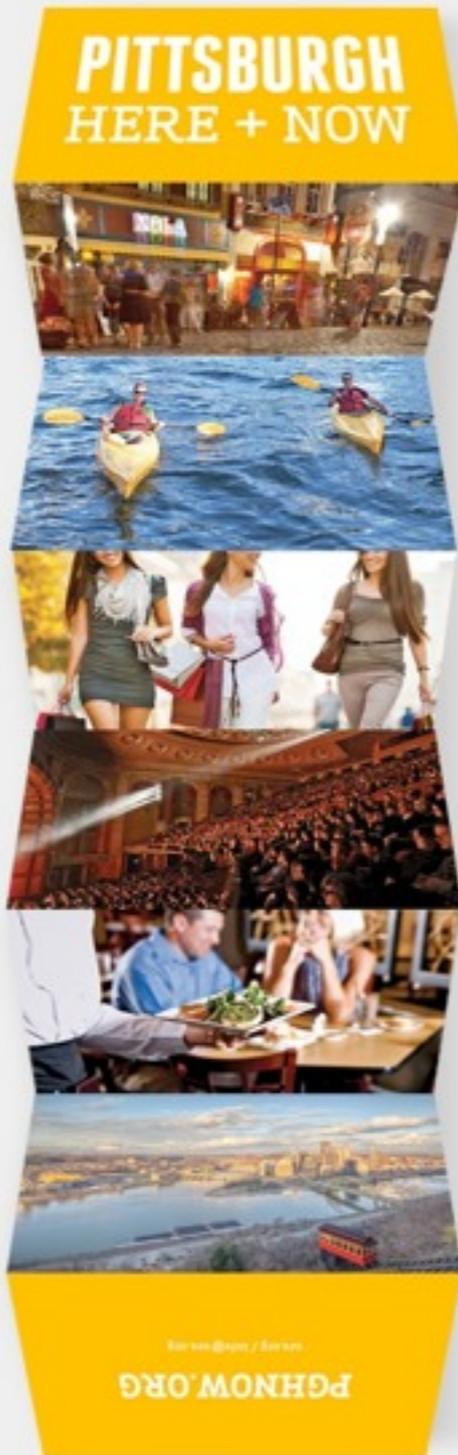
The message: Pittsburgh. Here + Now. This short, simple statement acknowledges and embraces the trajectory and momentum of the City and its many assets.

Our time has come. We've made it. Here. Now. And you need to be part of it.

Important to the rebranding campaign are the different ways of reaching out to various identified audience groups, and how this big picture idea can be modified from the many great examples of converging ideologies, to "making it" in Pittsburgh, and how this all gets consumed through various media streams, both traditional and non-traditional.



Elements of Wall-to-Wall's branding campaign, such as the small format booklet (shown above) leverage the City's greatest assets and showcase the wonderful progress that has been made throughout the Pittsburgh region.



**MOST LIVABLE CITY IN THE US**  
Entrepreneur, 2015  
 "PITTSBURGH STANDS AS A BOLD EXAMPLE OF HOW TO CREATE NEW JOBS AND INDUSTRIES WHILE TRANSITIONING TO A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ECONOMY."

**TOP FIVE BEST COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE MARKET IN THE U.S.**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**9 TOP TIER FOR DOWNTOWN OFFICE OCCUPANCY AND APARTMENT OCCUPANCY**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**TOP 10 STRONGEST RETAIL MARKET**  
Entrepreneur Retail Advisors, 2015

**"PITTSBURGH CERTAINLY IS ONE OF THE MOST REMARKABLE EXAMPLES OF A CITY THAT HAS RE-ENGINEERED ITSELF."**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**PITTSBURGH AMONG THE TOP 10 STRONGEST RETAIL MARKETS**  
Entrepreneur Retail Advisors, 2015

**NO. 1 CITY TO RELOCATE TO IN AMERICA**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**AMERICA'S MOST AFFORDABLE CITIES**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**PITTSBURGH RANKS 10<sup>TH</sup> IN APARTMENT ANNUAL RENT GAINS**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**PITTSBURGH 10<sup>TH</sup> ON JOB RANKINGS LIST**  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015

**ONE OF EIGHT CITIES THAT WANT YOUR BUSINESS**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**AMERICAN'S FIVE MOST UNDERRATED CITIES**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**TOP 10 COMEBACK CITY**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**TOP 10 LEAST-COSTLY METROS FOR BUSINESS**  
Entrepreneur, 2015

**GET DOWN TOWN**

The attention-grabbing and memorable tagline "Pittsburgh Here + Now" can be applied to various forms of media, both conventional and non-traditional. See the Appendix for additional ideas Wall-to-Wall produced to promote Downtown and its various offerings.

## Chapter 4

# Retail Attraction and Retention

The Retail Attraction and Retention Strategy focuses on the policies and procedures that support existing retail and promote new development clusters. The strategy will align and direct the City, URA, and other stakeholders in their efforts while creating a synergy for Downtown retail.

“Pedestrian and bike friendly streets make Downtown even more appealing to residents, workers, tourists, and shoppers—all key to attracting successful stores and restaurants.”

*Lucas Piatt, Chief Operating Officer, Millcraft Industries*



# Policies and Procedures

## FAST FACTS - RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Retail Attraction and Retention Strategy that considers vacant space, desired retailers, and an outreach plan.
2. Develop a database regarding space, vacancy, and lease status of targeted properties on focus streets.
3. Create a Downtown Retailer's Association.
4. Support and inform the Port Authority's study of Downtown bus routes, corridors, and stops.
5. Participate in the City's ongoing work on design guidelines.
6. Commission a Signage and Way-finding Study.
7. Coordinate, communicate, and focus existing facade improvement programs on key streets.
8. Develop policies that improve aesthetics and encourage active and interesting treatments for vacant and transitional uses.
9. Identify Downtown Districts to expand upon and complement the Cultural District.
10. Explore possibilities for coordinating building code requirements with existing buildings' upper floor redevelopment.
11. Coordinate and enhance existing efforts to control litter and instill users with pride in and responsibility for a clean Downtown.
12. Develop strategies for alternative transportation within the city such as streetcar and taxi initiatives and bike-share programs.

The Downtown Action Strategy sets an aggressive three-year improvement program. Critical to timely success is moving the agenda forward in three essential areas:

### *Leadership / Implementation Studies / Funding*

A champion is needed to lead the project, set priorities, and pursue necessary resources. The champion might be a continuation of the Downtown Retail Task Force Committees or a smaller group in conjunction with the URA and the City.

Recommendations must be refined and detailed to provide a more accurate projection of costs and clear direction to those responsible for implementation. Implementation studies needed include those for physical improvements such as streetscape upgrades; strategic studies for retail attraction and retention; and policies and programs to be undertaken by the public sector.

Funding will likely be provided by multiple sources and coordinated with the project priorities. Public, private, and civic sources must come together to develop a funding program adequate to continue the amazing pace of Downtown revitalization and promote retail attraction and retention.

# Urban Design

Urban design elements will enhance the retail experience by reinforcing connectivity, improving streetscapes, and promoting public safety.

“Urban design improvements strategically located to support and grow retail reinforces the PDP’s mission to advance initiatives that foster economic vitality and improve Downtown life.”

*Jeremy Waldrup President and CEO, Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership*



# Selection of Key Streets

## FAST FACTS - STREET SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Enhances opportunities for walking, biking, and other activities in Downtown.
2. Capitalizes on pedestrian scale and comfort.
3. Offers proximity to significant retail destinations.
4. Connects to downtown “extenders” (theaters, sports venues, hotels, etc.).
5. Links to residential uses.
6. Provides adjacency to green space.
7. Offers potential for redevelopment.

## Gallery 5.1 Selection of key streets

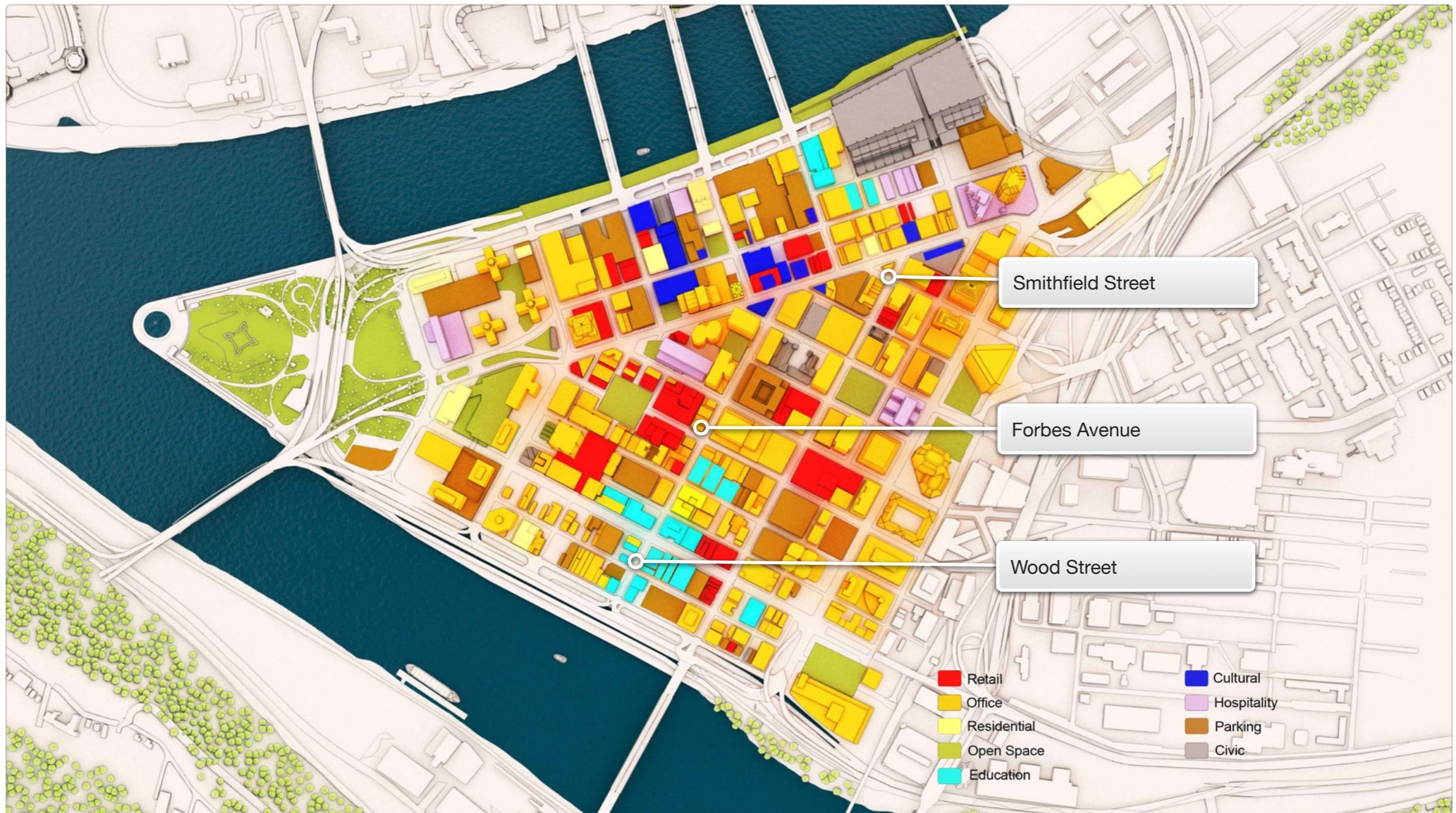


*Identify general land uses.*



The goal of the Urban Design Committee was to select streets within Downtown that will benefit most from the proposed three-year investment program, the Downtown Action Strategy. The process began by establishing broad categories for City streets. The Committee considered the existing condition and use of each street along with the potential for that street.

## Interactive 5.1 Connecting key elements within the City and beyond



Smithfield Street serves as a major cross-City connector, has significant retail potential, and can potentially be transformed to also include a bikeway link.

Forbes Avenue, future home of the Pittsburgh Playhouse, is a developing corridor that terminates at Market Square, a hub of activity.

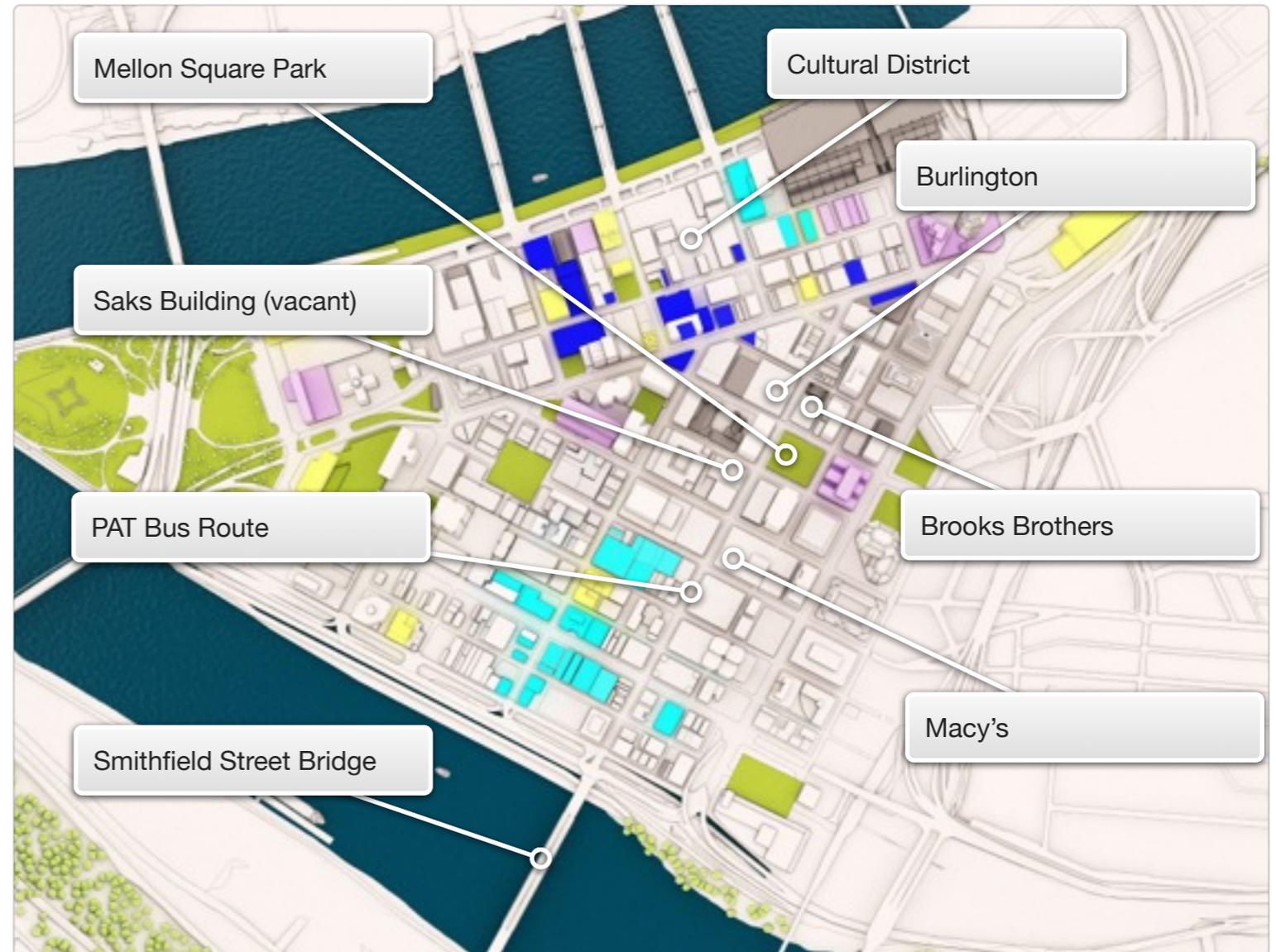
With proximity to the new Tower at PNC Plaza and the success of the Academic Village Initiative at Point Park University, The Forbes / Wood Street corridor will realize a noteworthy increase in population.

# Smithfield Street

## FAST FACTS - SMITHFIELD STREET

1. Major retailers include Brooks Brothers, Burlington and Macy's.
2. The vacant Saks Building offers opportunities for large-scale retail or parking.
3. Cross-City connectivity occurs between Station Square and the Convention Center / Strip District via Smithfield Street. The Smithfield Street Bridge provides a link from Mount Washington, the South Side, and Station Square to Downtown.
4. Opportunity exists to repurpose the PAT Bus Route to a bike lane providing North-South connectivity. Current studies are examining this potential.

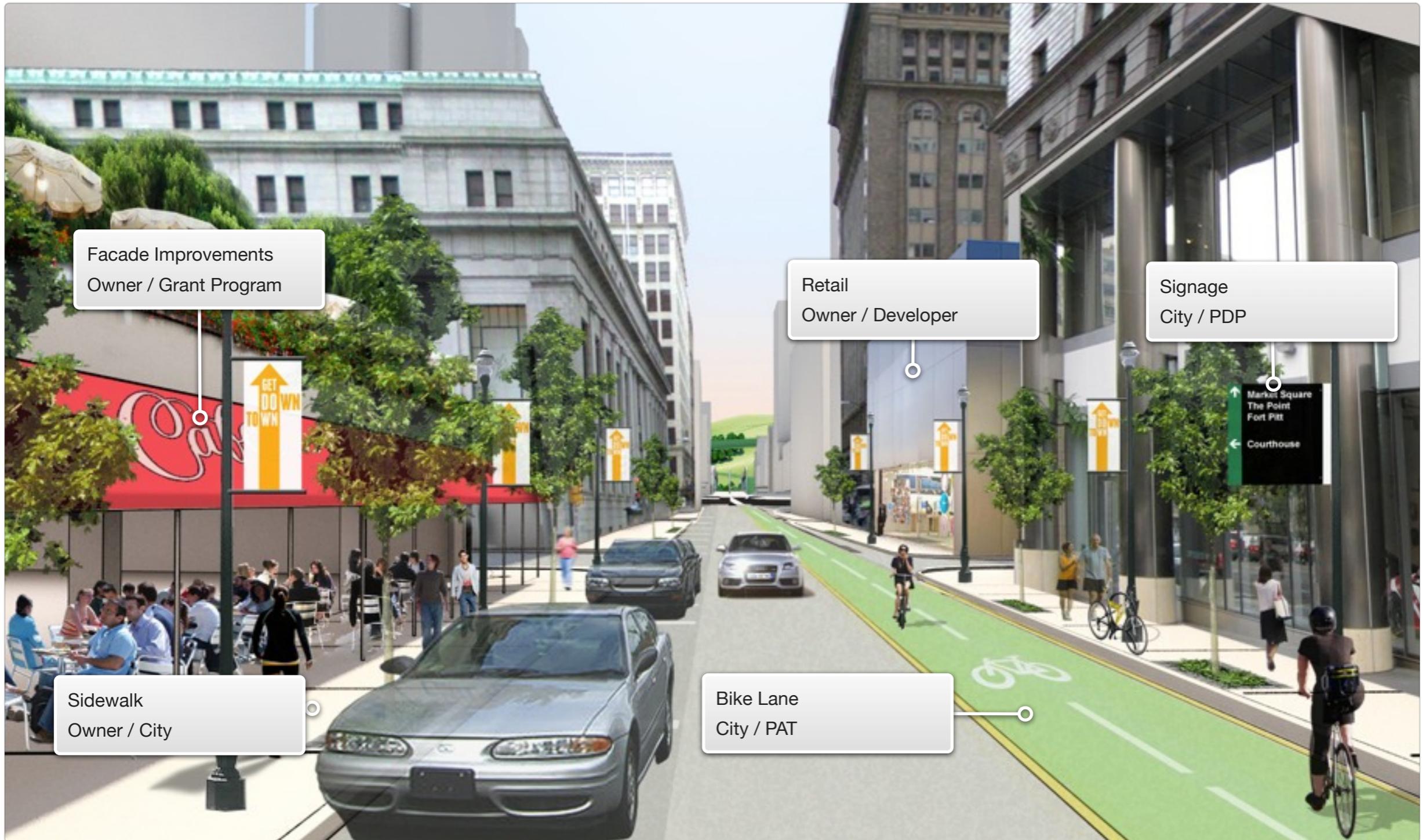
## Interactive 5.2 Key pedestrian drivers and opportunities





Smithfield Street - current conditions

**Interactive 5.3** Successful development of quality retail streets will require strong public / private partnerships. This aspirational illustration of an upgraded Smithfield Street is conceptual and will require additional study to refine the design and provide implementation details.



Smithfield Street - proposed improvements. Refer to the Appendix for a chart that outlines strategies and proposed parties responsible for implementation.

## Interactive 5.5 Smithfield Street summary by block



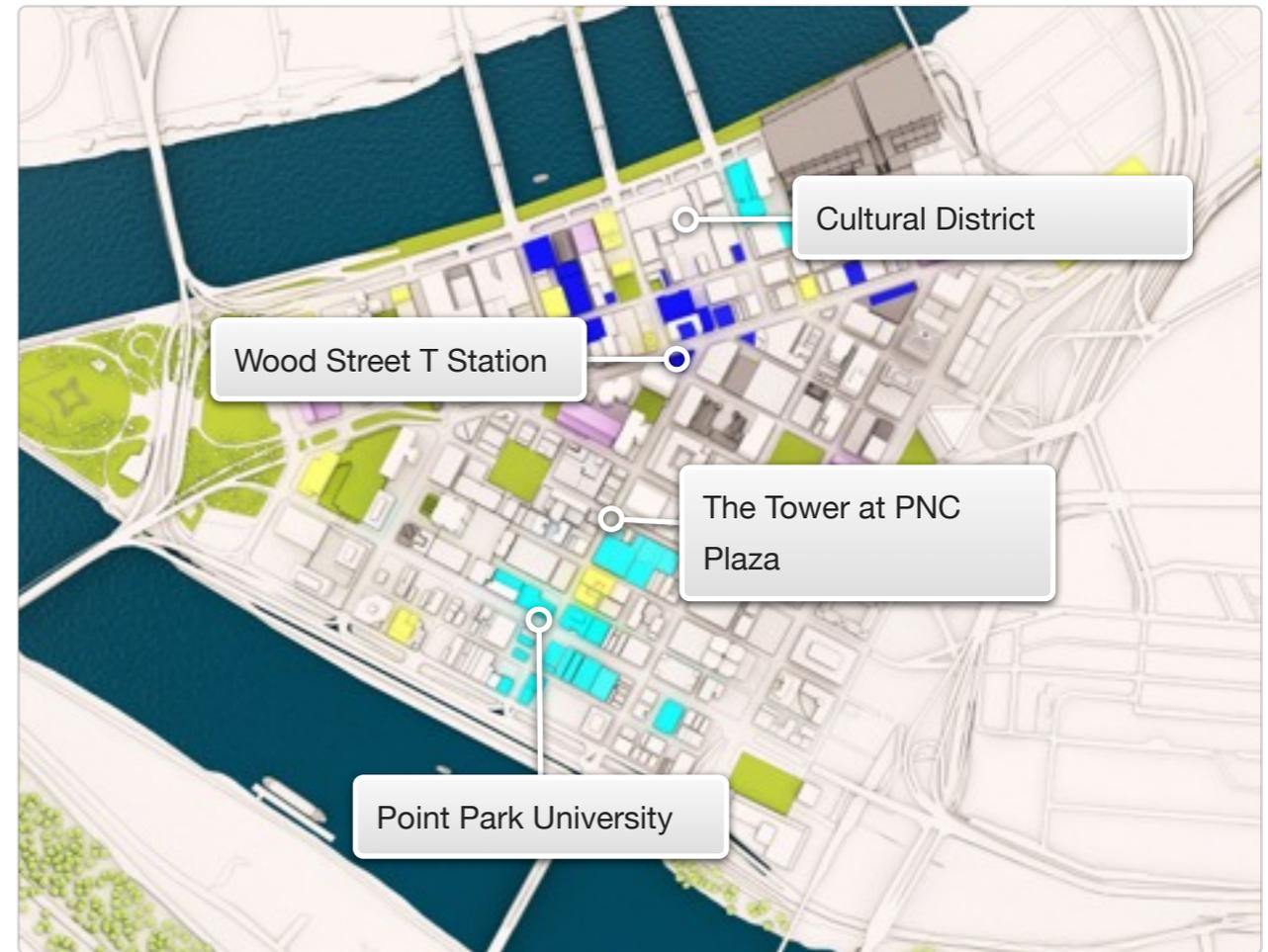
Touch caption above (iPad users) or see Chapter 6 - Cost Estimates for detailed cost estimates for proposed Smithfield Street improvements.

# Wood Street

## FAST FACTS - WOOD STREET

1. The Tower at PNC Plaza, the world's greenest skyscraper, represents a substantial investment in downtown.
2. Point Park University's Academic Village will continue to renovate buildings, and create wonderful outdoor spaces along Wood Street.
3. Four thousand Point Park students use Wood Street as a link to the retail center of Downtown, as well as the Cultural District.
4. The T Station provides transit connectivity to the North and South Shore office and entertainment venues.
5. Wood Street offers historic architecture and smaller floor plates.

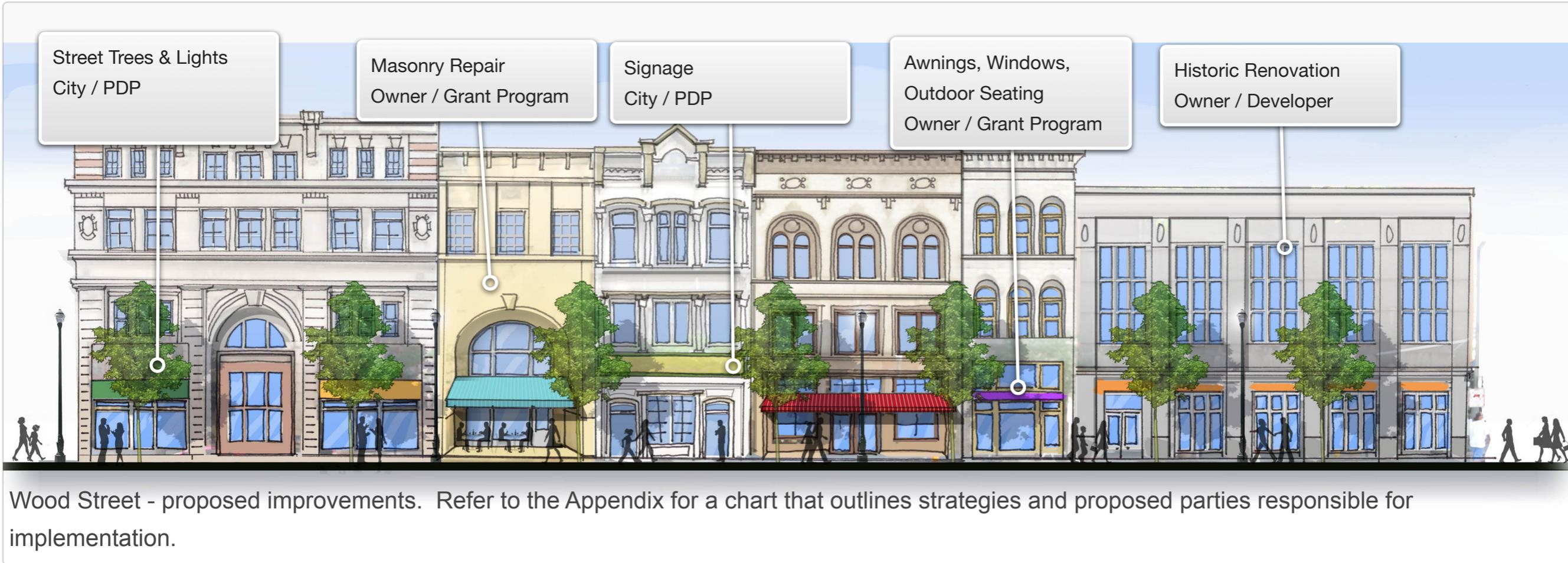
## Interactive 5.6 Wood Street Extenders



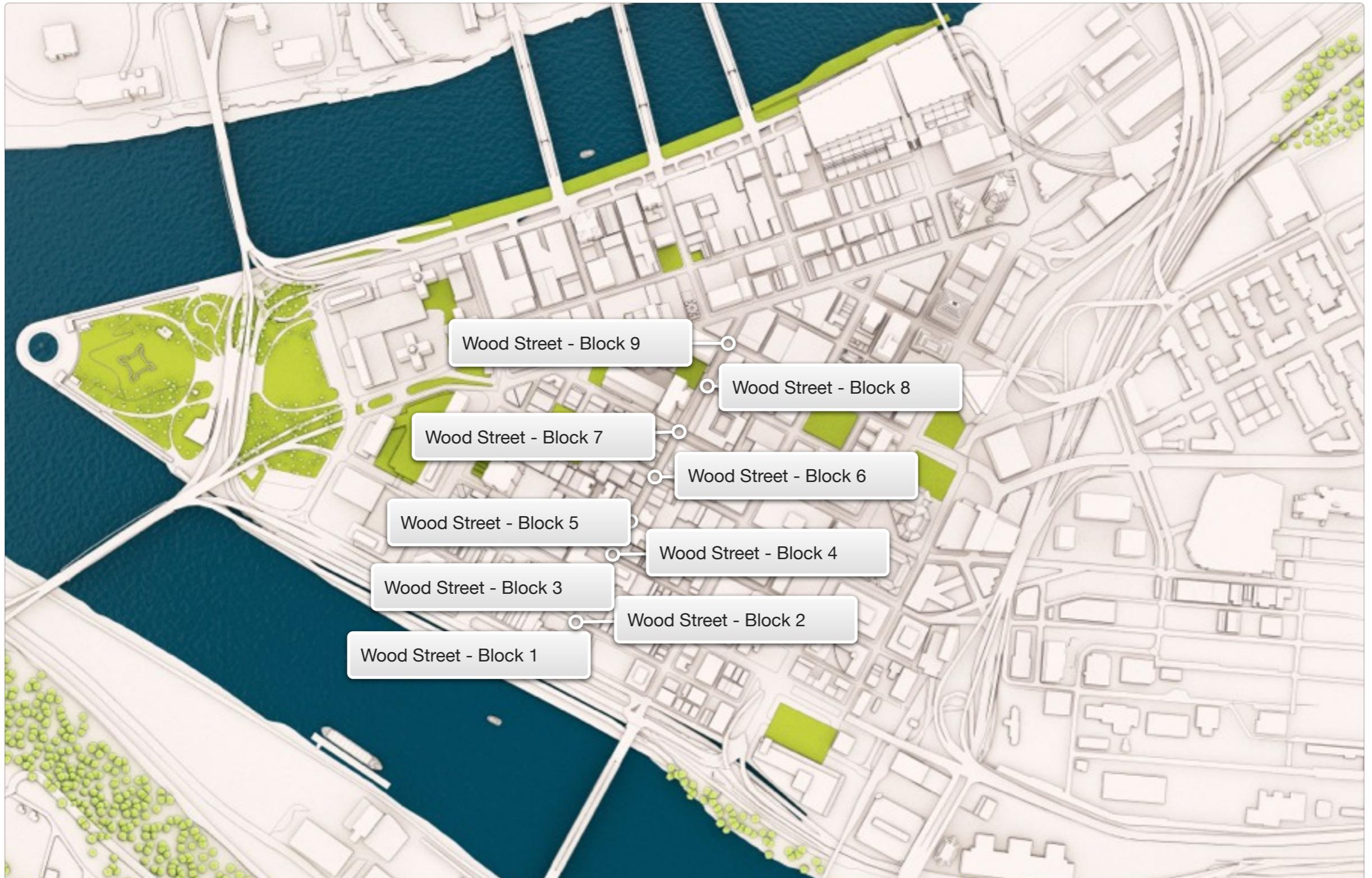


Wood Street - current conditions

**Interactive 5.7** Improvements to street trees and lights, masonry repair, new way-finding signage, awning and window replacements, outdoor seating, and general historic facade renovations can greatly improve the overall aesthetic and sense of place for Wood Street. This aspirational illustration of an upgraded Wood Street is conceptual and will require additional study to refine the design and provide implementation details.



## Interactive 5.8 Wood Street summary by block



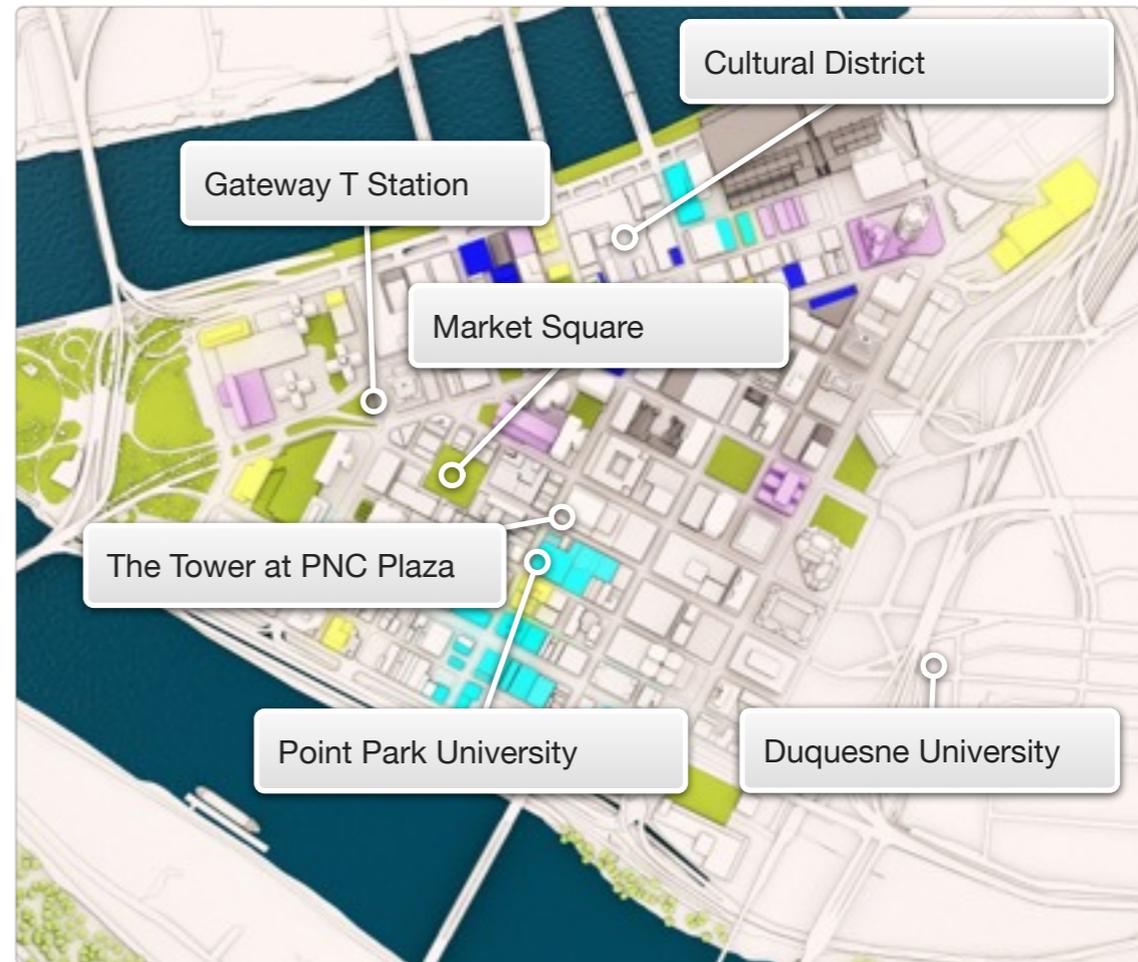
Touch the caption above (iPad users) or see Chapter 6 - Cost Estimates for detailed cost estimates for proposed Wood Street improvements.

# Forbes Avenue

## FAST FACTS - FORBES AVENUE

1. Forbes Avenue is a major entrance to Market Square which was recently renovated and boasts 30 restaurants, a range of converted condominiums, and exciting hot spots. Just beyond Market Square, the Gateway T Station provides an extension to the North Shore.
2. Redevelopment is moving up the Forbes corridor, but could benefit from a jump start East of Wood Street. The Tower at PNC Plaza development plays an important role in the redevelopment of this Downtown area.
3. The relocation of Point Park University's Pittsburgh Playhouse to the Forbes Avenue corridor completes the transformation of lower Forbes and creates a new gateway to the Smithfield Street corridor.
4. Opportunity exists to provide a dedicated East – West bike lane in lieu of a combined travel/ parking lane.
5. Duquesne University's 10,000 students, 3,500 of whom live on campus, are connected to Market Square and the heart of Downtown retail via Forbes Avenue.

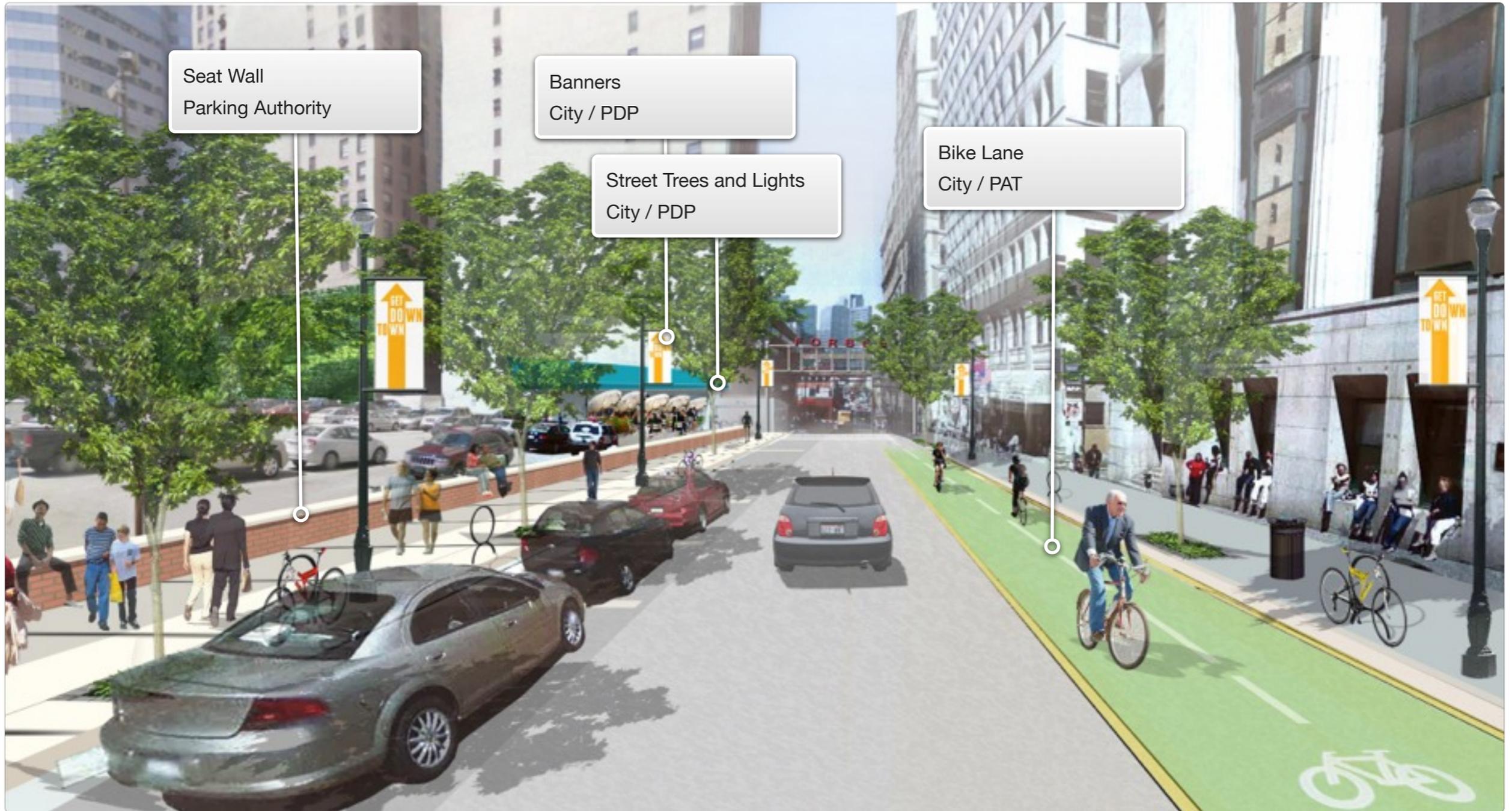
## Interactive 5.9 Forbes Avenue Extenders





Forbes Avenue - current conditions

**Interactive 5.10** Proposed improvements for Forbes Avenue include building a seat wall and adding banners, lights, and street trees. Converting the current street to include a bike lane would also contribute to the overall improvement of Forbes Avenue. This aspirational illustration of an upgraded Forbes Avenue is conceptual and will require additional study to refine the design and provide implementation details.



Forbes Avenue - proposed improvements. Refer to the Appendix for a chart that outlines strategies and proposed parties responsible for implementation.

**Interactive 5.11** Forbes Avenue summary by block



Touch the caption above (iPad users) or see Chapter 6 - Cost Estimates for detailed cost estimates for proposed Forbes Avenue improvements.

# SMITHFIELD STREET PROPOSED STRATEGIES

Strategy	Responsibility	Notes
Façade Improvements	Owner / Grant Program	Support business owners in grant applications for renovations to facades, awnings, and signs.
Retail	Owner / Developer	Encourage redevelopment of large key assets for renewed retail use.
Signage	City / PDP	The City should develop a long-term signage and way-finding program and design standards.
Sidewalk	Owner / City	The City should widen sidewalks in conjunction with the bikeway initiative. Sidewalk materials and patterns should be simplified as business owners are responsible for long-term maintenance.
Bike Lane	City / PAT	A bike lane will provide a unique cross-City connector for riders, while making Smithfield Street more pedestrian friendly.

# WOOD STREET PROPOSED STRATEGIES

ITEM	Responsibility	Notes
Street Trees and Lights	City / PDP	Add landscape elements for enhanced aesthetic and improved security.
Masonry Repair	Owner / Grant Program	Repair structures to enhance the look of the streetscape.
Signage	City / PDP	Provide a an identifiable system for helping visitors find their way Downtown.
Awnings, Windows, Outdoor Seating	Owner / Grant Program	Add character and color to the streetscape.
Historic Renovation	Owner / Developer	Transform solid structures into facilities that better service the Downtown region.

# FORBES AVENUE PROPOSED STRATEGIES

ITEM	Responsibility	Notes
Seat Wall	Parking Authority	A seat wall can enhance the streetscape by providing a welcoming and convenient place for visitors to rest or watch passersby. It also provides a nice separation between the sidewalk and what lies beyond it (parking lot, etc.).
Banners	City / PDP	Attractive banners add an iconic element to the streetscape.
Street Trees and Lights	City / PDP	Lighting enhancements further promote a sense of security while street trees break up the hard street surfaces and add visual interest.
Bike Lane	City / PAT	A bike lane has a calming effect on traffic, while giving Forbes Avenue a more pedestrian feel.

Appendix I

# Additional Resources & Image Gallery



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# Web Resources

*Allegheny Conference* – [www.alleghenyconference.org](http://www.alleghenyconference.org)

*Bike Pittsburgh* – [www.bike-pgh.org](http://www.bike-pgh.org)

*City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania* – [www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us)

*Design Center* – [www.cdcp.org](http://www.cdcp.org)

*Downtown Neighborhood Association* – [www.pittsburghdna.com](http://www.pittsburghdna.com)

*Duquesne University* – [www.duq.edu](http://www.duq.edu)

*Millcraft Industries* – [www.rivervuepgh.com](http://www.rivervuepgh.com); [www.marketsquareplace.com](http://www.marketsquareplace.com)

*Neighbors in the Strip* – [www.neighborsinthestrip.com](http://www.neighborsinthestrip.com)

*Pittsburgh Cultural Trust* – [www.trustarts.org](http://www.trustarts.org)

*Pittsburgh Department of City Planning* – [www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp)

*Pittsburgh Downtown Neighborhood Association* – [www.pittsburghdna.com](http://www.pittsburghdna.com)

*Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership* – [www.downtownpittsburgh.com](http://www.downtownpittsburgh.com)

*Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation* – [www.phlf.org](http://www.phlf.org)

*Pittsburgh Parking Authority* – [www.pittsburghparking.com](http://www.pittsburghparking.com)

*Pittsburgh Regional Alliance* – [www.alleghenyconference.org/pr](http://www.alleghenyconference.org/pr)

*Plan Pittsburgh* – [www.planpgh.com](http://www.planpgh.com)

*PNC Financial Services Group* – [www.thetoweratpncplaza.com](http://www.thetoweratpncplaza.com)

*Point Park University* – [www.pointpark.edu](http://www.pointpark.edu)

*Port Authority of Allegheny County* – [www.portauthority.org](http://www.portauthority.org)

*TreeVitalize* – [www.treevitalize.net](http://www.treevitalize.net)

*Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh* – [www.ura.org](http://www.ura.org)

*Visit Pittsburgh* – [www.visitpittsburgh.com](http://www.visitpittsburgh.com)

*Zipcar* – [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com)

## Gallery 2.1 A walkable city



**Image 1.** Several major office buildings house the majority of the daytime population in the city. Areas where the walking circles overlap should be considered prime retail location opportunities.



**Image 2.** The majority of the City's businesses, corporations, and retailers are within a five-minute walking distance from one another.

## Gallery 5.1 Selection of key streets



**Image 1.** Identify general land uses.



**Image 3.** Capitalize on Downtown “extenders” that keep people in the city longer and attract visitors from the region and from around the world.



**Image 2.** Identify key links between Downtown residents, commercial office buildings, and retail opportunities.



**Image 4.** Green spaces are key drivers of pedestrian movements.

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Web site