



# CIVIC DISTRICT

# History

Downtown Topeka's Civic District has a broad and varied history in terms of its overall character and more specifically its predominant uses. This variance in its history is due in no small part to its geographic spread, extending from S. Quincy Street east to the railroad tracks. As Downtown and the railroad grew, so did the divergence of the character of the District from its original development.

During this area's initial years in the 1880's, the frontage of 6th Avenue was developed in the service and retail industries. 6th Avenue, at this time, was the main access road to Topeka from the east, and was given the name "Liberty Highway" for its end destination of the Free State Capital of Kansas. Its definitive character was similar in most respects to the development occurring along S. Kansas Avenue.



Fire Station No. 2, City Hall, and Civic Auditorium at SE 7th and Quincy, 1900

The majority of the District, however, was developed as a residential neighborhood, home of many prominent early Topekans. One home in particular belonged to Col. George Veale, a prominent early developer and entrepreneur within Topeka's first several decades. Col. Veale lived at the northeast corner of SE 8th & Quincy Streets. The City of Topeka obtained this property in 1900 for the development of a multi-purpose building containing Topeka's City Hall, Fire Station No. 2, and a Civic Auditorium .

The area north of SE 7th Street, however, set its early development pattern in a different trajectory. The most prominent business to be located in the 700 block of SE Quincy Street was that of the Smith Automobile Manufacturing Company. Smith Automobile Manufacturing Company built luxury cars between the years of 1902 to 1912. Smith was the first automobile manufacturer west of the Mississippi River, and also produced the very first automobile to successfully ascend Pikes Peak in Colorado .



The Smith Automobile Co. Side Door Tanneau. 1906 Model

The Great Depression brought significant changes to the area. Among the highlights in new construction was a significant addition to the Santa Fe Railroad Hospital in 1930, and Works Progress Administration project to build what is now the current Topeka City Hall and the Topeka Performing Arts Center in 1937. After the Great Depression and WWII, construction began of Interstate Highway-70 began in 1956, becoming among the first miles completed of the nation's Interstate Highway system .

Major public development projects within the Civic District continued through the turn of the Century with the construction of the Shawnee County Jail in 1987, the new BNSF office building in 1992, and the Metropolitan Transit Authority Quincy Street bus transfer station in 2003 .



Santa Fe Hospital. SE 6th & Madison St. 1930s

# Civic



- Government complex
- Office/facility consolidations
- High-quality public building design
- Gateway

# Local Government Hub

The Civic District can act as the local government “campus” unifying City, County, and Transit headquarters and operations among others. Large surface parking lots provide an opportunity for government office relocation that would enable valuable property along Kansas Avenue and riverfront for catalytic developments. A consolidation of uses would enhance efficient collaboration and partnering among different agencies while providing feasible re-use of marginalized parcels in the shadow of County jail facilities.



# Potential Build-Out

## New Development and Conversions

- 1 **Justice Center** - The consolidation of City/County law enforcement and judicial facilities will free prime parcels for new development, streamline coordination, and transform a blighted gateway to Downtown. A new law enforcement center would feature structured parking for increased parking density limiting the footprint.
- 2 **Fleet Building** - Currently fleet facilities are located adjacent to the Law Enforcement Center and Topeka Metro. Whether necessary in one or two locations, new fleet buildings will be necessary to maintain the Topeka Police and Topeka Metro fleet. Consolidation of fleet facilities should be considered to reduce cost and increase efficiencies.
- 3 **Metro Transit Site** - Potential relocation of Topeka Metro from the River South District to the Civic District would further consolidate government uses to the Civic District and place operations near the Quincy Street Station. The proposed new site for some operations, bus barn and fleet building would replace surface parking lots and vacant parcels, and represents the most viable re-location site downtown.



- 4 **The Topeka Capital Journal Building** is currently under new ownership. The buildings mid-century modern design makes it worth preserving through rehabilitation. The resurgence of this formidable 120k sq. ft. space can be another downtown destination point for unique entertainment, recreation, retail, or drinking/eating experience in line with other nearby repurposed historic buildings.
- 5 **Entertainment Venue Rehab** - The old Capital Iron Works facility with large windows and brick exterior has the makings to become some sort of adaptive re-use entertainment venue. Other cities have experienced an increase in rehabilitation of similar structures, with intent to create a 12+ hour hub. The structures large size would allow for multiple uses like concert venue, brew or food hall, or banquet hall would add a unique destination point on the east side of Downtown.

# Government Uses

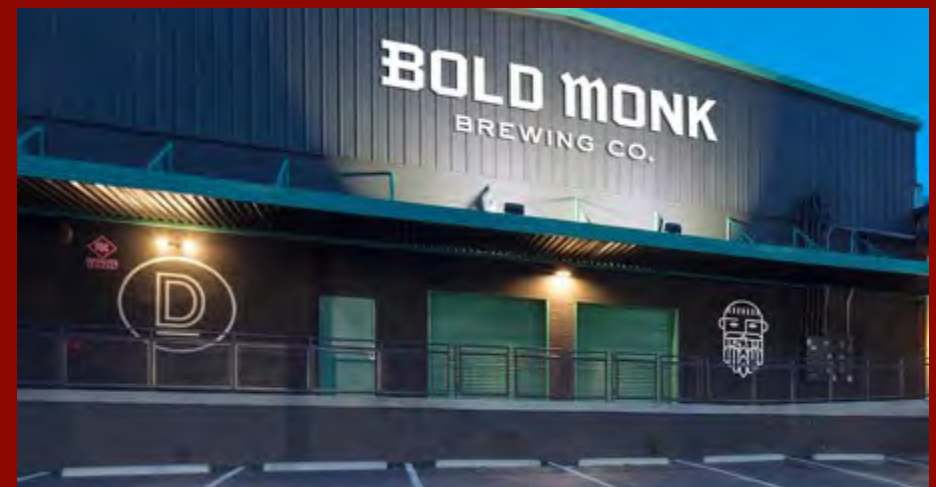
## Justice Center



## Metro Facility



# Entertainment Venue



# Circulation/Complete Streets



Changes to I-70/Polk-Quincy Viaduct will ultimately impact the circulation surrounding the Civic District. A split-diamond design between 8th Avenue and 10th Avenue will simplify access points safely and open up potential to convert Monroe Street and Madison Street will be limited to access points at 6th Avenue and 10th Street. New development along the Polk-Quincy Viaduct will highlight the government heavy uses found within the district.

Type/Location	Recommendation	Complete Streets Typology	Ped	Bike	Bus	Car
No Change	6th Avenue	Mixed Use Boulevard	•	•	•	•
	7th Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•			•
	8th Avenue	Mixed Use Boulevard	•	•	•	•
	9th Street	Industrial Street	•			•
	10th Avenue	Industrial Street	•	•		•
	Jefferson Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•			•
	Adams Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•			•
No Change/ Conversion	Monroe Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•			•
	Madison Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•		•	•
Lane Reallocation (Removal of Travel Lane)	Quincy Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•	•	•	•

## Polk-Quincy Viaduct Impacts

Expected changes to I-70/Polk-Quincy Viaduct will impact how vehicles interact with the Civic District. Current proposals will simplify the number of entrances and exits into the district, directing traffic to the corridors designed to handle greater levels of traffic.

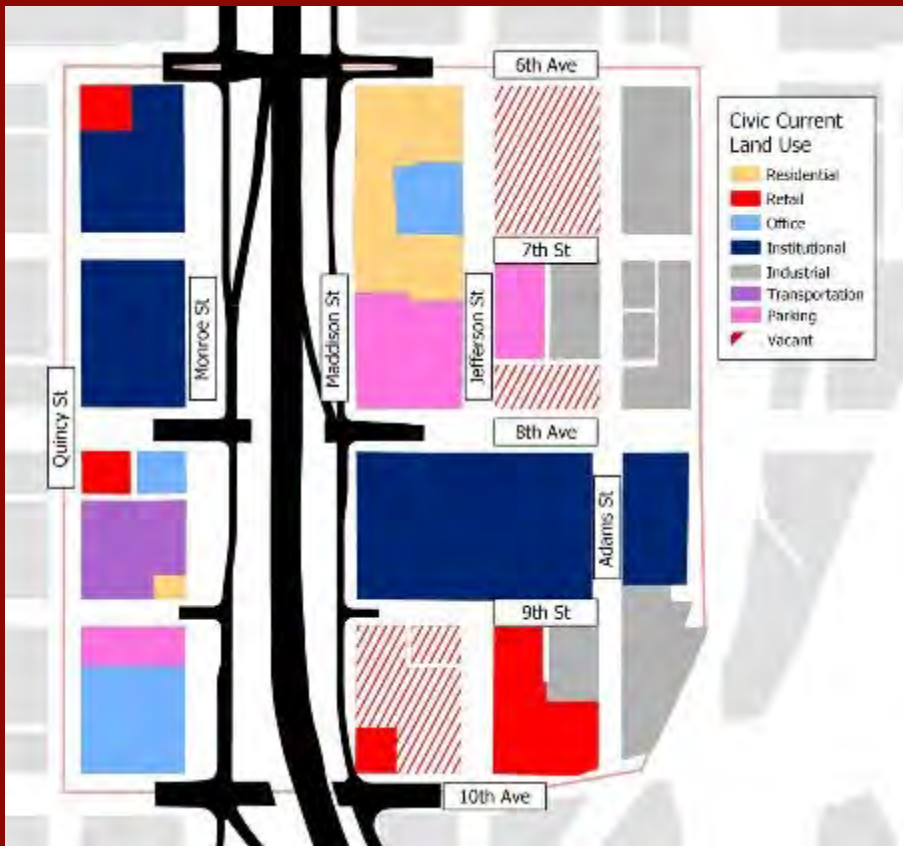
Westbound Exits	Westbound Entrances	Eastbound Exits	Eastbound Entrances
10th Avenue	8th Avenue	Topeka Boulevard	Kansas Avenue
Kansas Avenue	Topeka Boulevard	8th Avenue	10th Avenue



# Existing Character

## Land Use

Land uses in the Civic District are dominated by City, State, and institutional uses and is split by I-70 running through the middle of the district. Two full city blocks are dedicated to the Shawnee County Detention Center that dominates the eastern landscape of the district. Industrial uses are located adjacent to the BNSF rail lines on the eastern edge with vacant parcels and buildings dotting the landscape. Future land use in the district should provide further consolidation of City, State, and institutional uses for new office space oriented toward government use. Jefferson and 8th Avenue could be a potential location suitable for relocation of Topeka Metro operations facility, bus barn, and fleet services building. While Jefferson and 10th Avenue can accommodate a combined City/County Justice Center at the gateway to Downtown. New industrial mixed use at Adams and 8th Avenue may house an entertainment venue providing activity to the district after 5:00 PM.

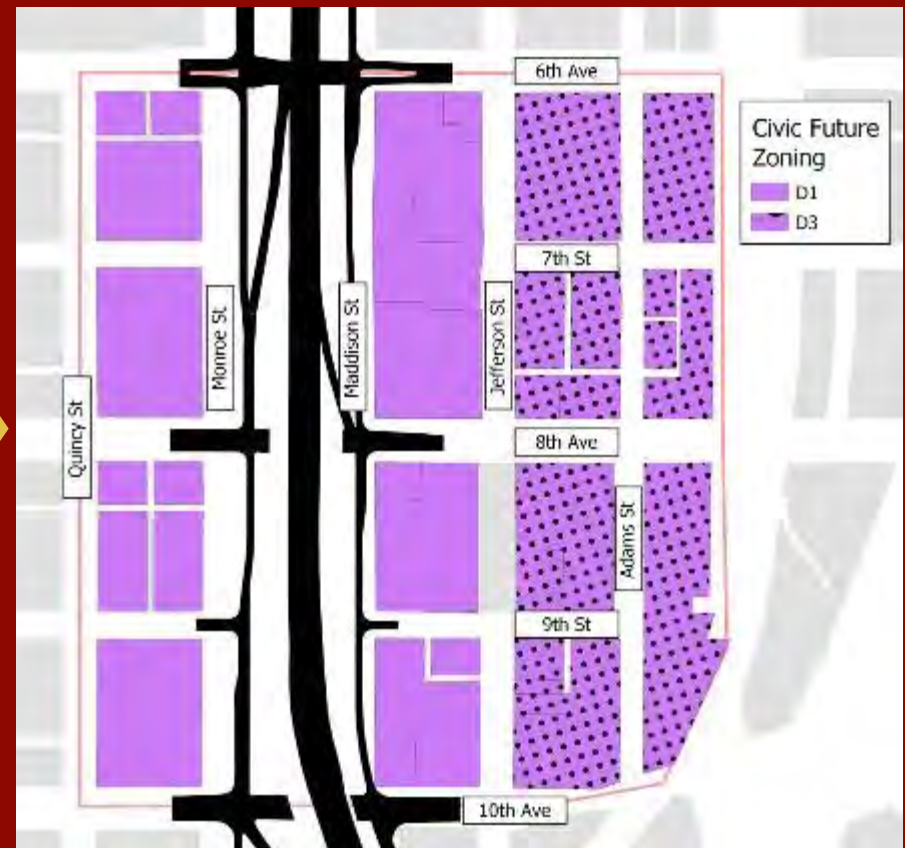


# Existing Character Zoning

The Civic District will be rezoned to D-1 and D-3. Rezoning of this district will accommodate the existing office spaces, while promoting continued development of government oriented office space and institutional uses.

**D-1 Zoning** - Designed to facilitate a compatible mixed use activity center within the core area of downtown Topeka. The district is predominately composed of state offices, as well as local and federal facilities, commercial and retail uses. The district includes compatible, office, civic, commercial retail/service, and residential uses which complement and support a high density of activity and facilitate pedestrian usage.

**D-3 Zoning** - Intended to reestablish the linkage between downtown and the Kansas River, it also supports linkages to rail and freight areas. The district includes industrial, commercial and office uses as primary uses and housing as a secondary use. Land use in this zoning district should emphasize the relationship between downtown institutional, and industrial, as well as expanded cultural opportunities in the general downtown area.





# Implementation Summary

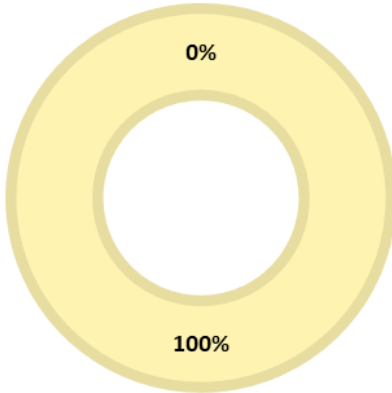
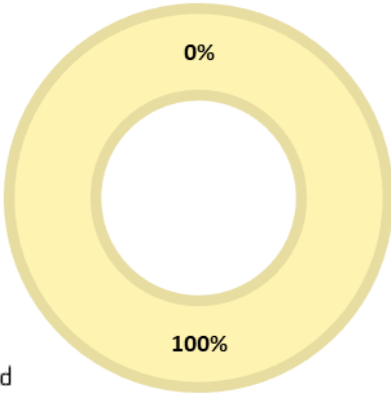
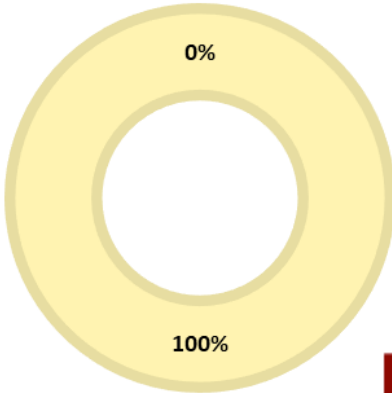
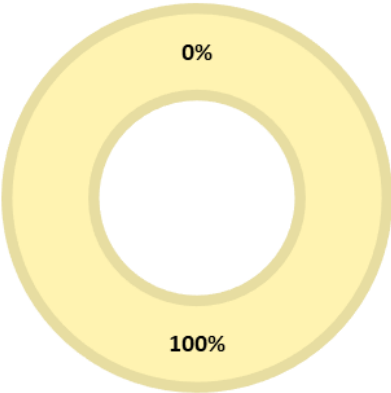
	Recommendations	Other Considerations
<b>Land Use</b>	Consolidation of government and institutional uses.	Reliant on new build.
<b>Zoning</b>	Rezone district to D-1 and D-3	See map in Existing Character
<b>Housing</b>	No new housing added.	
<b>Office</b>	330,000 sq. ft. of new and rehabbed office space added for government use.	This office space does not count toward new Class A office space due to government need.
<b>Retail</b>	Rehabilitation of existing industrial building for entertainment venue.	
<b>Hotel</b>	No hotel beds added.	
<b>Parking</b>	Much of the existing parking will remain in place. Need structured parking may be required with new government office development.	
<b>Building Design Standards</b>	Create residential and nonresidential design standards for D Districts.	

**HOUSING**

**HOTEL ROOMS**

**OFFICE**

**EXISTING RETAIL**



Added  
 Needed