



UNITED STATES COURT AND POST HOUSE

OFFICE AND CATALYST DISTRICT

UNITED STATE POST OFFIC

History

The Office & Catalyst District reflects the oldest remnants of the history of the City of Topeka, being the location where the first permanent structures within this city were built. The City of Topeka has always centered its commercial activities along Kansas Avenue extending south from the Kansas River, so it was a natural progression of events for the city's first stone building to be erected in the 400 block of S. Kansas Ave. This building was originally built for mercantile and commerce, but was almost immediately adopted for use as the meeting place for the framers of the Kansas Free State Constitution (Constitution Hall). This same building was later used as the senate chamber in the early days of Kansas state government.



Shawnee County Courthouse (4th and Kansas Avenue)

As the population of the city increased, the building known as Constitution Hall ceased being a free-standing building, and was incorporated within the block by adjacent structures, and was given a new, matching brick façade. Several of the buildings within this block extending north were later collectively utilized as the Kansas State Capital during construction of the (current) State Capital building.

Construction within this block culminated in the 1870s with the construction of the first Shawnee County Courthouse and jail, built at the southwest corner of SW 4th St. & S. Kansas Ave.

Most of what is visible today within the Office & Catalyst District is the result of Topeka Urban Renewal program. Topeka initiated its Urban Renewal program in 1956 with the creation of the Topeka Urban Renewal Authority (URA). The URA established its mission in accordance with the Federal Urban Renewal Program by designating an area in the northeast corner of Downtown Topeka, for clearance and redevelopment. This area was referred to by the URA as the Keyway Urban Renewal Project, and included an area known as "The Bottoms." Historically lacking in large-scale commercial development, the Bottoms was predominately owned and occupied by Topeka's immigrant and ethnic minority population. The area suffered much damage as a result of the 1951 flood and was in declining condition. The Keyway Urban Renewal Project sought to remedy this decline with the wholesale purchase of land, and the subsequent displacement of approximately 3,000 residents from within this area, whose homes and businesses were subsequently demolished.

Another result of Keyway Urban Renewal Project was the construction of US Interstate Highway 70 along the east side of Downtown Topeka. Interstate-70 not only played a major role within the Keyway Urban Renewal Project, but it also contributed significantly to the development of the city's built environment, including the establishment of a major racial and socioeconomic divider within the city.

Other significant developments along the path of I-70 within Downtown Topeka were the construction of a Montgomery Ward's Department store (currently used as the Topeka & Shawnee County Law Enforcement Center), The Townsite Plaza & Tower (S. Kansas Ave. & SE 6th Ave.), the American Home Life Insurance Building (S. Kansas Ave. & SE 4th St.), and the Southwestern Bell Telephone Building (SE 6th & Madison).

Other historic buildings within this area include Constitution Hall, originally constructed in 1855, and the US Federal Courthouse, constructed in 1933. The US Federal Courthouse was the first courtroom to hear the historic *Brown v Board of Education* decision ending racial segregation in the United States in 1954.



U.S. Federal Courthouse (5th and Kansas Avenue)

Office and Catalyst



- Class A office upgrades/HQs
- Office to residential conversions
- Catalyst 1 - Convention Center/Hotel
- Catalyst 2—Post Office Redux
- Extend KS Ave makeover (“bridge” to river)

Convention Center Hub

While government-related uses are likely to cluster around the Capitol building, this district has the most potential for upgraded Class A office space and hospitality growth. Many office users are straying away from sterile office parks and seeking out more active places. Adding a major convention center/hotel hub to the mix of office workers will bring 12-hour activity and food/beverage choices within a 5 minute walk to Evely Plaza or riverfront. Potential catalytic projects at 4th Street and Kansas Avenue , Post Office Building, and Townsite Plaza can fortify Kansas Avenue as the mixed-use spine and become key stepping stones between River South and Historic Kansas Avenue.



Potential Build-Out

New Development

1 Convention Center/Hotel - This new activity hub would replace the LEC and concentrate significant pedestrian activity on Kansas Avenue only 5 minutes from Evergy Plaza and River South. This addresses a higher and better use of the site post PQV while capturing larger conferences lost to other cities.

2 New Mixed Use - Due to the new Polk/Quincy Viaduct alignment the existing structures will likely be impacted. Replacement of these building with new infill will allow for a Kansas Avenue presence.

3 Parking Garage - Potential new housing located at 235 S Kansas Avenue and a signature park in the River South District would drive up the need for new structured parking. A new parking garage would align with the desire to remove surface parking for higher and better uses.

4 New Mixed Use - Development of new mixed use along Kansas Avenue would promote a vibrant and active 12 hour spine for Downtown Topeka. Mixed Use may include commercial, office and residential uses.



5 Boutique Hotel - A recently conducted Hotel Market Study showed a need for additional hotel beds in Downtown Topeka. New development on this site would remove surface parking while providing needed hotel beds.

6 Parking Garage Extension - As surface parking lots are replaced with other uses, a need for higher density parking will arise. This project builds off of an existing parking garage while eliminating another surface parking lot.

Potential Build-Out Conversions

- 1 **Townsite Tower** - To align with greater demand for housing, a portion of the 16-story Townsite Tower has potential to convert to new apartments with amazing views of Downtown and the Capitol. In addition, new conference/event space could be integrated into the “Top of the Tower”, first floor lobby, and a unique “outdoor” roof deck on the 3rd floor.
- 2 **503 S Kansas Avenue** - Similarly to Townsite Tower, this building is currently a State used Office Building. However, the buildings prime location on Kansas Avenue makes it a candidate for conversion to housing.
- 3 **424 S Kansas Avenue** - The predominantly vacant Post Office Building, home of the US Federal Courthouse and historic Brown v Board of Education, shows potential to convert to a more active use(s). The variety of spaces available in the building has potential for a food hall, office space, and potential for a few housing units.
- 4 **235 S Kansas Ave** - Another example of existing office space that has potential for housing conversion. It’s location on the north end of the district could act as an buffer from Office and Catalyst to the River South district.



- 5 **220 SE 6th Avenue** - As identified in the Downtown Market Study. Downtown Topeka is in need of new Class A Office Space. The current AT&T building shows potential for rehab, taking existing Class B office space and elevating it to Class A.
- 6 **Townsite Plaza** - With the need for a makeover, the mid-century modern Townsite Plaza is ripe for Class A office space rehab if it can soften up its outdoor plaza space with more shade and inviting features for tenants including the Tower. Critical public parking is below grade, but will need capital investment soon.

Catalyst Site

Hotel and Convention



Mixed Use

Historic US Court House



Circulation/Complete Streets



The Polk-Quincy Viaduct will impact the Office and Catalyst District, with properties to the northeast being intersected by the viaduct. The new Polk-Quincy will lead to the closure of 3rd Street, with highway access located at Kansas Avenue, 4th Street, and 6th Avenue.

Type/Location	Recommendation	Complete Streets Typology	Ped	Bike	Bus	Car
Conversions (1-way to 2-way)	4th St. (from Jackson St. to Kansa Ave.)	Mixed Use Boulevard	•	•		•
	5th St. (from Jackson St. to 4th St.)	Mixed Use Boulevard		•		•
	Jackson St. (from PQV to 6th Ave.)	Mixed Use Boulevard	•			•
Lane Reallocation (Removal of travel lanes)	Kansas Ave. (PQV to 6th Ave.) - Street treatment to create pedestrian friendly environment while accommodating existing traffic demand. See below.	Main Street	•	•	•	•
No Change	6th Street	Mixed Use Boulevard	•	•	•	•
	3rd Street	Mixed Use Boulevard				•

Kansas Avenue 6th Avenue to 2nd Street



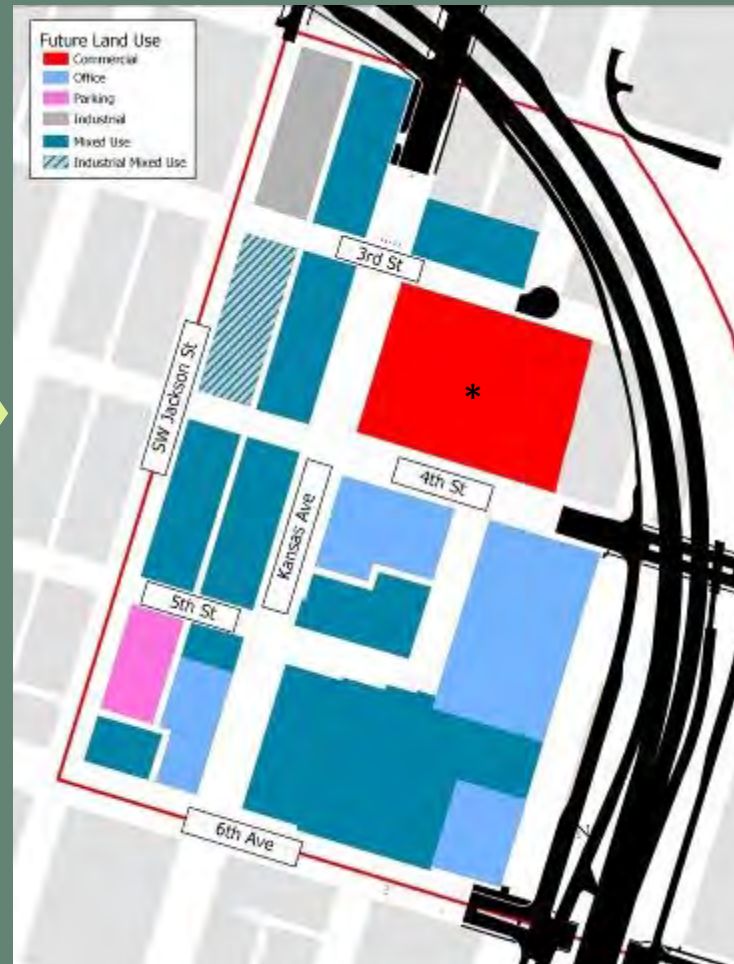
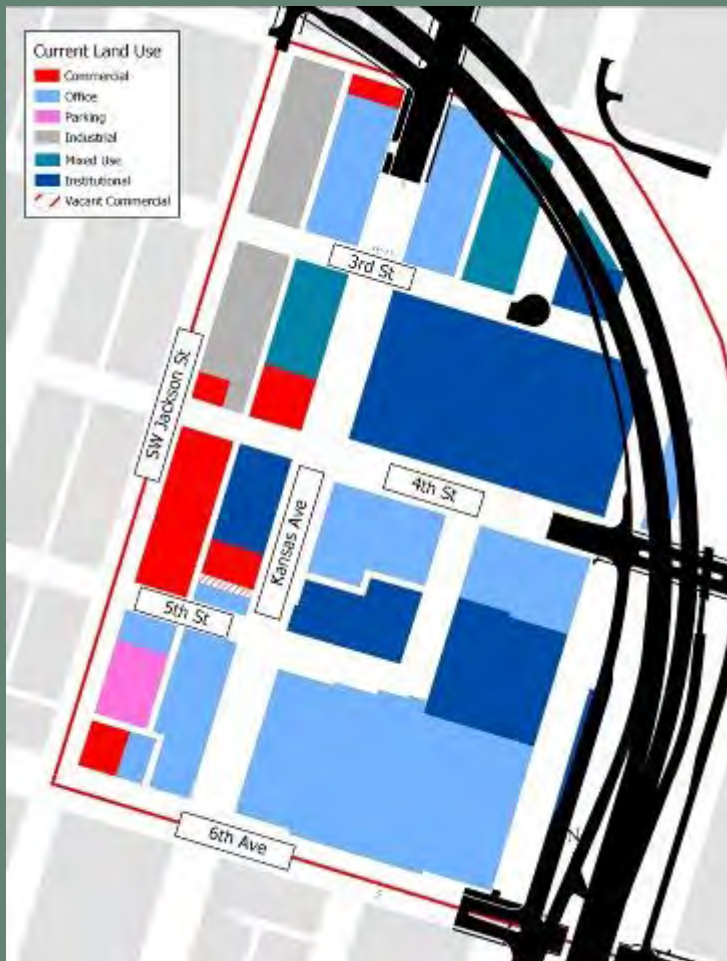
- 1 Travel Lanes Reduced to 3 lanes from 5
- 2 Sharrows/dedicated bike lanes
- 3 Angled Parking
- 4 Increased sidewalk widths for increased pedestrian use
- 5 Mixed Use Development to increase pedestrian amenities
- 6 Catalyst Hotel and Convention Center

Existing Character

Land Use

Much of the existing land use is dominated by office and institutional uses with scattered commercial uses. Building off the success of the Kansas Avenue Streetscape implementation to the south, the Office and Catalyst District expects the same street treatment from 6th Street to 2nd Street. Along with streetscape improvements, a new hotel and convention center on the Law Enforcement Center site will act as a Catalyst for the district. Several other sites along Kansas Avenue and 6th Avenue have potential for rehabilitation or conversion.

- Potential Rehab Sites:
- AT&T Building (Office)
 - Townsite Plaza and Tower (Mixed Use)
 - U.S. Post Office/Historic Court House (Mixed Use)
 - 235 S Kansas Ave (Housing)



* Catalyst Site - Proposed Hotel and Convention Center site.

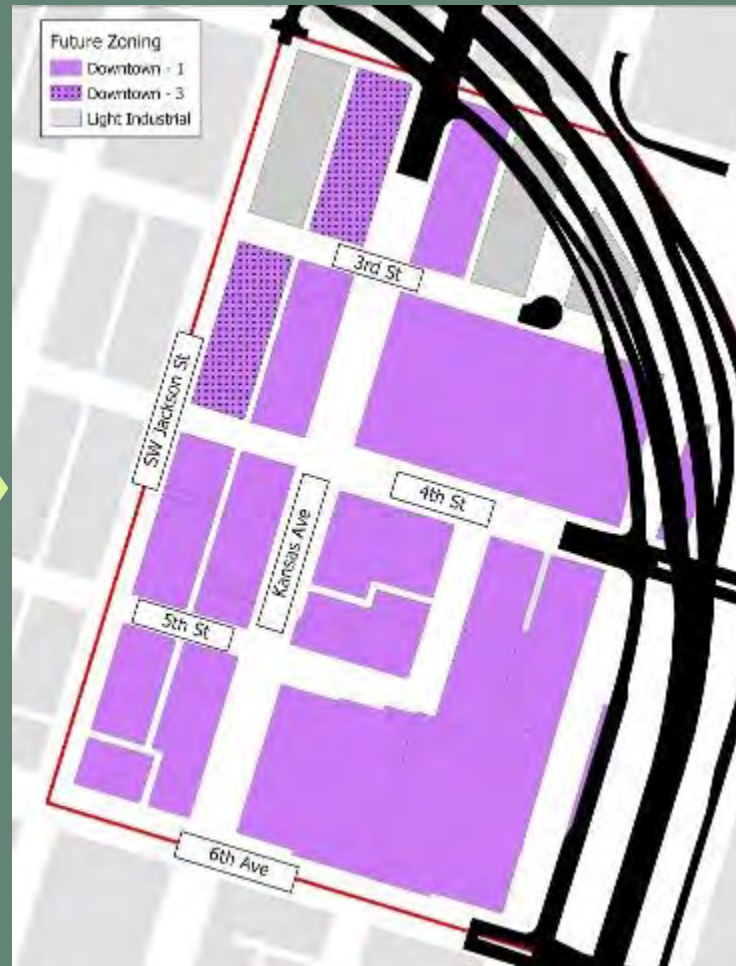
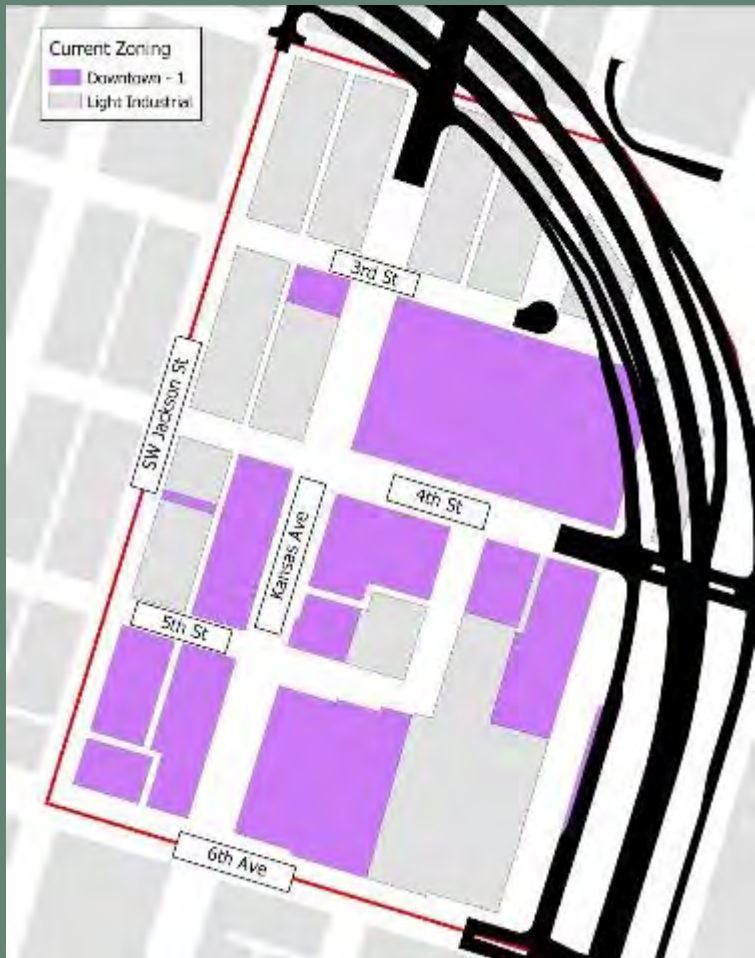
Existing Character

Zoning

The Office and Catalyst District has segments of “D-1” Downtown District and “I-1” Light Industrial. It is proposed to rezone this area to D-1 and D-3, allowing the existing uses to remain and expanding options for new development and aligning zoning with the existing office 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 residential, office, civic, and commercial retail/service uses which complement and support a high density of activity and facilitate pedestrian usage.

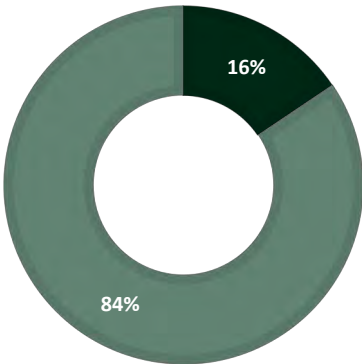
D-3 Zoning - Intended to reestablish the linkage between downtown and the Kansas River. The district includes industrial, commercial and office uses as primary uses and housing as a secondary use. Land use in this zoning district should emphasize the relationship between downtown and the river, as well as expand cultural opportunities in the general downtown area.



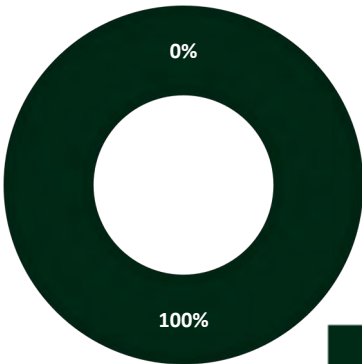
Implementation Summary

	Recommendations	Other Considerations
Land Use	Increase quantity of retail uses and housing units.	
Zoning	Rezone district to D-1 and D-3	See map in Existing Character
Housing	Potential to add 140 units of new housing	Reliant on conversion of existing office uses to reach unit count proposed.
Office	Conversion of segments of office space to accommodate needed Class A office space and housing units.	
Retail	New retail uses within mixed use new developments will help guide the district to become a 12+ hour district.	
Hotel	Development of a hotel and convention center will provide much needed hotel beds to Downtown Topeka.	Boutique hotels could build off of energy generated by downtown hotel and convention center.
Parking	Angled on-street parking is preferred in high density commercial areas. However, bike and pedestrian considerations may dictate the need for parallel parking or other parking requirements.	Structured Parking is preferred. Where possible surface parking lots should be replaced with higher density structured parking.
Building Design Standards	Create residential and nonresidential design standards for D Districts.	

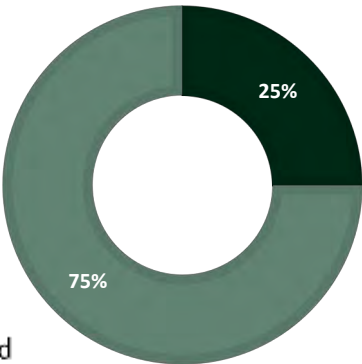
HOUSING



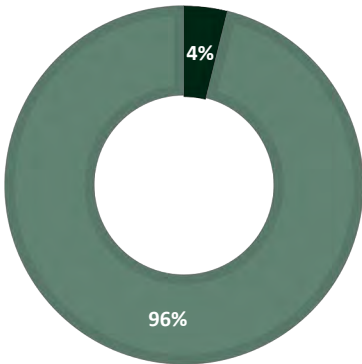
HOTEL ROOMS



OFFICE



RETAIL



Added
 Needed