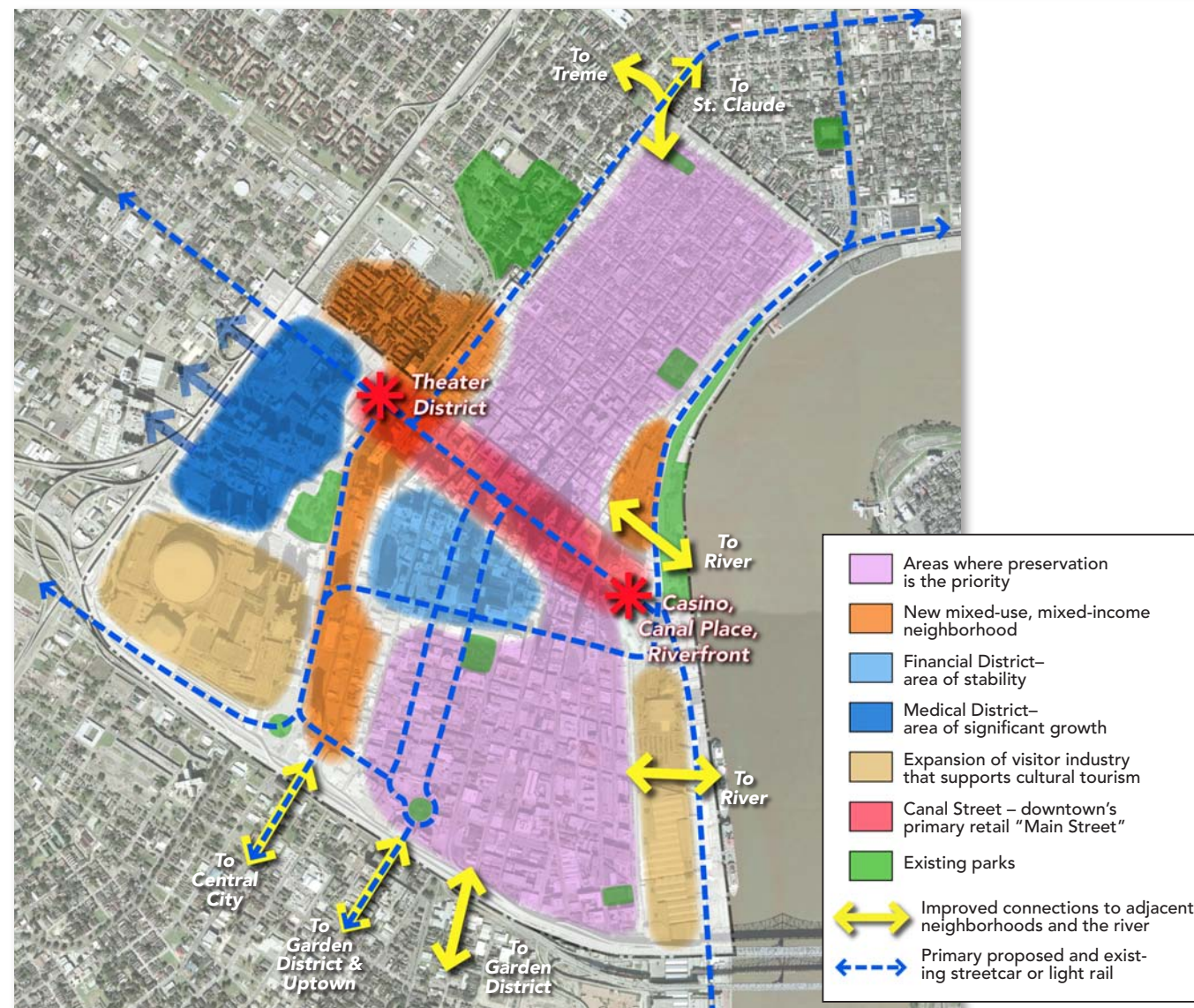


## CHAPTER 4

# Vision and goals



Vision diagram for downtown.

At the dawn of a new era in which every region in America is rediscovering the joys and value to be found in the history, culture, entertainment, walkability, and similar qualities in which downtowns excel, New Orleans’s downtown, District 1, is poised to play a critical role in leading the city and region in recovery from the terrible tragedy inflicted by Hurricane Katrina. Ironically, it is New Orleans’s long-standing commitment to preserving its physical and cultural heritage and the community’s resistance to damaging the integrity and richness of the places that have hosted and fostered this heritage like the French Quarter, Lafayette Square, the Warehouse District, and Picayune Place, that now set the stage for a period of vigorous innovation and rebirth.

A little more than a year after Hurricane Katrina, the human and economic toll on the people who live and work downtown is still visible—but so too are the seeds of renaissance. The vigilance with which New Orleans has preserved its heritage prepared the ground for these seeds, but the spirit of innovation and creative energy that these seeds display that makes them truly notable. Their nature and variety are in themselves inspiring and suggest great promise for downtown, the city, and the region: the Medical District community’s drive to build itself into a nationally recognized center of teaching, clinical care, research, and entrepreneurship; the visitor industry’s mutually reinforcing commitments to a cultural tourism industry built around reinvigorated music, theater, arts, cuisine, museums, and related activities and to establishing New Orleans as an international convention destination that brings the world’s intellectual and financial capital to the city—and in turn supports the venues that bolster cultural tourism; the historic district communities’ commitment to attracting people of many incomes, races, ages, and backgrounds to live downtown and their support for unique and high-quality galleries, restaurants, cabarets, and other venues that attract and support graphic designers, Web designers, filmmakers, writers, and others who are building growing “industries of the mind.”

With the right cultivation—strategic public and private investment, effective partnerships among the community, the City, and the private sector, and continued leadership from the community itself—District 1 will build a national model of the social, economic, and cultural leadership and support that a downtown can offer its city and region. More than ever, downtown will serve New Orleans as:

- **The city’s common ground—in fact, the one place in a city and region whose diversity has been a source of both struggle and inspiration that offers true common ground. The downtown would draw on its immense wealth of amenities and its commitment to inclusiveness to invite people of every income age, race, cultural background, and**

*“New Orleans has become one of the cities of the mind and is therefore immortal.”*

—CLEANTH BROOKS, 1906–1994, literary critic

**other differences to make New Orleans their home and to find and celebrate their shared humanity and commitment to recovery.**

- **An economic leader that brings together the creative people, new ideas, national investment capital, and concentrated market that will spawn a new generation of economic opportunity for the entire city and region.**
- **A stage upon which the city and region can display the richness and range of their unique concentration of preserved history and living culture to a worldwide audience.**

The downtown community translated its vision into a series of goals to guide planning:

- **Repair damage from the storm in every form.**
  - > Repair physical damage by recapturing the unique character and qualities of each of downtown’s established neighborhoods.
  - > Repair social and cultural damage by attracting back, and housing, the full range of people who lived in, worked in, and

enjoyed downtown and who were all essential to creating the extraordinary flavor and texture of a city admired around the world: the performers and the residents who attend their performances; the restaurant workers and visitors who patronize their restaurants; the artists and the gallery owners who show their work; and all the others who make the downtown a rich and wondrous place.

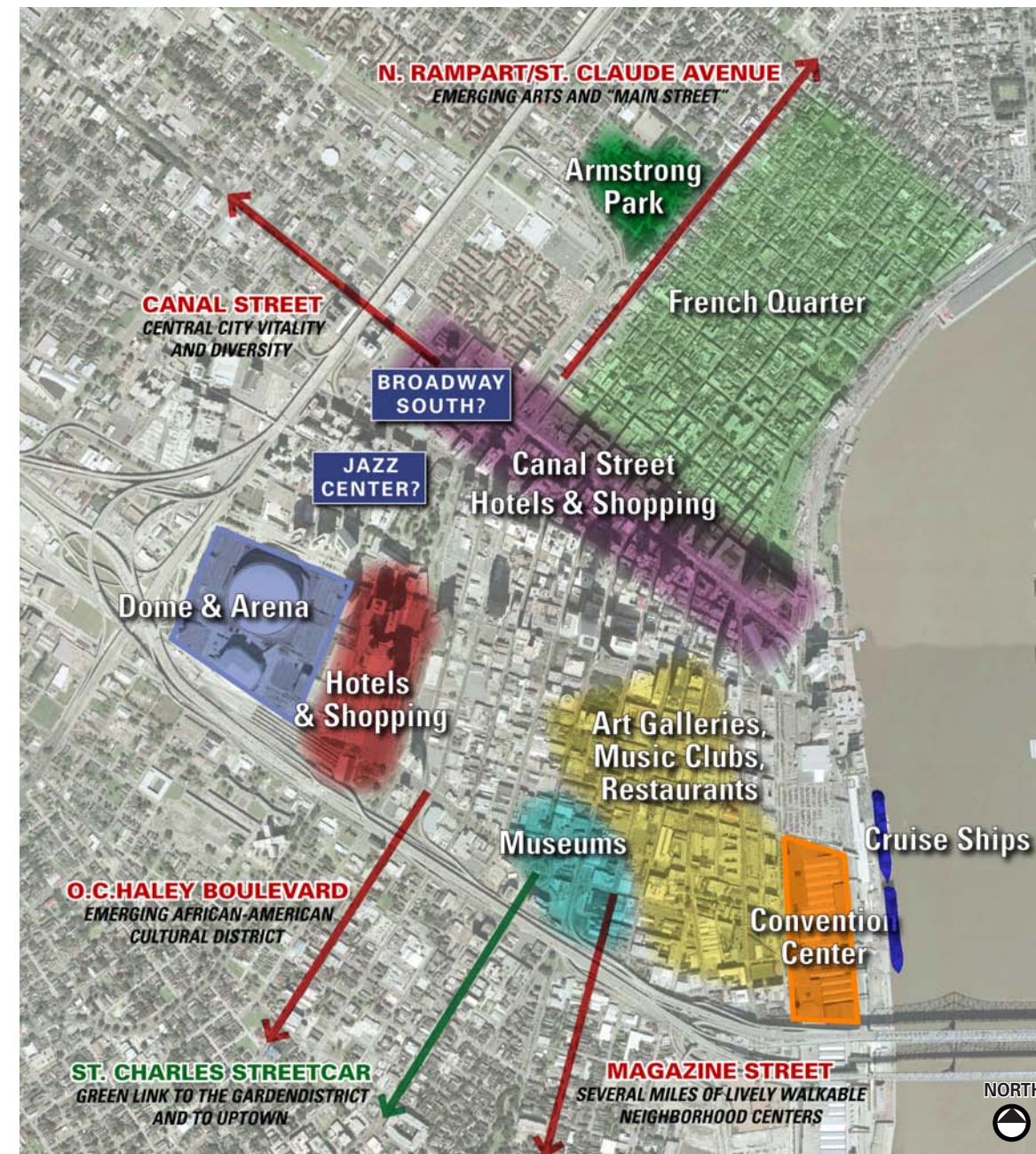
- > Repair economic damage by moving quickly to support downtown’s rich mix of economic activity—from its nationally recognized medical institutions and restaurants to the numerous small businesses that make up one of America’s most vibrant small-business economies.

- **Address long-standing opportunities and challenges whose resolution is critical to downtown’s ability to thrive and help lead the larger city and region’s recovery.**
  - > Dramatically increase the number of downtown residents who will, on one hand, help support the shops, restaurants, galleries, and other amenities central to downtown’s success and, on the other, create demand that will support exciting new housing opportunities that will in turn attract more people—leading medical practitioners and researchers, entrepreneurs, and others—to live and work in the Medical District and elsewhere downtown.
  - > Break down the economic, racial, and other barriers that have separated downtown from the city’s less affluent neighborhoods, including downtown’s immediate neighbor-

Iberville, by initiating a long-term commitment to creating a large, mixed-income residential presence downtown, achieved in part through collaborative planning with the Iberville community.

- > Connect downtown to the larger city, the region, and the world with a new generation of transportation improvements that begin with restored and expanded streetcar service to the city’s neighborhoods, move

on to commuter and possibly high-speed rail service to Baton Rouge and the region, and include significant airport and cruise ship improvements that enhance downtown’s—and the city and region’s—connections to the world.



Downtown’s amenities make it an especially attractive place for people to live, work, or visit.