

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION AGENDA



MEDFORD
CITY COUNCIL

May 13, 2026

6:00 p.m.

City Hall, Medford Room

411 W. 8th Street, Room 330

The public may watch this meeting live [HERE](#). Recorded study sessions are available on the City's website [HERE](#).

Study Sessions are held to informally discuss topics of City business. The City Council does not vote, make decisions or hear public comment during study sessions.

1. Legislative Update – Cindy Robert
2. Urban Renewal 101 – Michelle King and Elaine Howard
3. Responding to Public Comment
4. Council Officers Update

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STUDY SESSION

To: Mayor and Council

From: Michelle King, Planning Director & Interim Executive Director, MURA

Study Session Date: May 13, 2026

Subject: Urban Renewal 101 - Elaine Howard

COUNCIL DIRECTION

This is an informational and education agenda item with no specific ask of Council at this time. Elaine Howard and Tiberius Consulting have been engaged to provide guidance and further feasibility analysis to Council of a potential new urban renewal district in Medford (MURA 2.0).

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

Presenter: Elaine Howard, Principal, Elaine Howard Consulting
Additional Staff: Michelle King, Interim Executive Director, MURA
Harry Weiss, Urban Renewal Project Specialist

PREVIOUS STUDY SESSIONS AND COUNCIL BRIEFINGS ON THE TOPIC

On March 23, 2023, January 11, 2024, and April 11, 2024, Staff presented preliminary maps and financial projections for a future urban renewal area. Council requested further analysis of the potential boundary of a new urban renewal district with revised TIF projections.

At a September 10, 2025 Study Session, the MURA Citizen Advisory Committee presented its recommendations concerning the formation of MURA 2.0, including an expanded boundary, goals and objectives, and potential governance structure.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Medford City Council has expressed a general interest in the continued use of urban renewal as a redevelopment tool. Staff were directed to research various iterations of a new UR district, starting with a modest expansion of the Downtown and Liberty Park area to include adjoining areas to the south and northwest. Subsequent Council direction expanded the study area to encompass a much larger footprint extending into West Medford, along West McAndrews Street and down the Bear Creek Corridor.

Council appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to engage community partners in the exploration of a new urban renewal initiative and to make recommendations regarding the plan area, primary goals and policy drivers, and governance structure. The CAC's recommendations were presented at the September 10, 2025, study session (see exhibit attached).

At the May 13 Study Session Ms. Howard will provide the following:

- an overview of urban renewal practice in Oregon
- how tax increment financing works and its impact on local taxing districts
- the process by which urban renewal plans are drafted and formally adopted
- statutory limitations on urban renewal projects
- the role of the MURA Board in proposing a plan vs. that of Council approving a plan
- public input and consultation requirements in plan development and adoption

Tiberius is undertaking financial analysis of the proposed district, including the projection of its tax increment revenue and financial planning strategies. Tiberius's analysis will be presented separately at a later date.

COUNCIL GOALS

Council Goal and Objective: Community Planning & Neighborhood Identity

Strategy: Goal 21. Leverage MURA 2.0 to focus strategic investment in high-need corridors and districts.

Deliverable: Goal 21.1(1) Create MURA 2.0

EXHIBITS

Citizens Advisory Committee Recommendations
(Memo & PPT from Sept 10, 2025 Study Session)

MURA 2.0 Overview – Goals & Objectives Summary

The Medford Urban Renewal Agency (MURA) 2.0 plan builds on the foundation of the current district plan from the original City Center Revitalization Plan (CCRP). This new phase takes a broader approach to renewal, focused on increasing housing, preparing sites for job growth, and improving public infrastructure in key areas of Medford.

What's Different:

MURA 2.0 moves away from a project-by-project model and toward a district-wide strategy. This allows for more flexibility and coordination with city planning efforts like the Downtown Master Plan and the Climate Friendly Area (CFA) program. MURA's role is to help unlock sites for redevelopment by investing in infrastructure, removing barriers, and partnering with the private sector.

Where the Focus Is:

- Downtown Medford
- Bear Creek Corridor (including Hawthorne and Bear Creek Park)
- West Main Gateway
- Rogue Valley Mall / North Medford area

These areas were identified as having the highest potential for community benefit, whether through new housing, economic activity, or site cleanup.

Who's Involved:

A hybrid board structure is being proposed for MURA 2.0, with five at-large community members and two City Councilmembers as voting members. This approach keeps the agency accountable while bringing more local voices into the process. Term limits and board policies are being developed to ensure stability even as elected leadership changes.

What Comes Next

With direction from the MURA Board, City Council, Mayor, and CAC, the process now shifts to implementation. The following next steps are required to complete the district formation and move toward adoption:

- **Set the Financial Limits.** Confirm the maximum indebtedness (TIF cap) based on district priorities and scale.
- **Finalize the Plan and Map.** Prepare the legal plan and boundary documents for Council review and public notice.
- **Council Recommendation.** Present a complete recommendation to Council for authorization to proceed with adoption steps.

DRAFT MURA 2.0 Goals & Objectives For CAC Recommendation to Council and MURA Board

Decision-Making and Community Role

Governance and Community Engagement

Focus: MURA 2.0 will continue as an independent decision-making body to ensure focus, transparency, and alignment with citywide goals. Building on the foundation from the previous district, a refined governance structure is recommended, one that keeps the City Council closely involved while also formalizing roles for community stakeholders. A hybrid model balances political accountability with broader input, creating space for residents, business owners, and subject matter experts to contribute meaningfully to decisions. This structure strengthens oversight, encourages shared ownership, and reflects the collaborative spirit that shaped MURA 2.0's formation.

MURA 2.0 Board Composition: Transition to a board that includes both City Council members and appointed community members. Example, the Board could consist of City Councilors plus several community members like residents of the renewal areas, business/property owners, and subject matter experts (in housing, finance, etc.). This hybrid approach mirrors the “steering committee” concept endorsed by the Council for developing the new district and would institutionalize that collaboration throughout implementation.

The board will consist of seven total voting members: five at-large residents and two City Councilmembers. The governance will be supported through internal policies that establish term limits, board succession planning, and other mechanisms that protect against turnover instability. These tools are designed to keep the agency transparent and stable, even as elected leadership changes.

District Framework: Vision and Direction

Building on the success of the City Center Revitalization Plan for current MURA, this updated framework shifts from a project-by-project approach to a broader strategy focused on workforce growth, housing production, and private investment. The mission of MURA 2.0 is to eliminate blight and depreciating property values in targeted areas and, in the process, attract high-quality private development that provides jobs, expands housing options, and enhances quality of life. By leveraging tax-increment financing over the lifespan of the district, MURA 2.0 will drive revitalization while leveraging and enhancing community assets.

As MURA evolves, project decisions will need to reflect both long-term value and near-term community impact. Establishing a transparent and repeatable method for evaluating investments will define how the district achieves measurable public benefit and policy

alignment. This includes assessing projects for alignment with focus areas, site readiness, and their ability to support broader district goals.

This vision is guided by three key drivers:

- A. **Workforce Development & Retention:** Ensure Medford’s economic growth by preparing sites and facilities that attract and retain employers, aligning job centers with housing and transportation access.
- B. **Housing Supply & Mixed-Use Vitality:** Expand the supply of workforce and mixed-income housing through adaptive reuse and infill development, especially in downtown and along key corridors. New housing will primarily target moderate-income households to support the workforce.
- C. **Economic & Land Use Optimization:** Transform underutilized commercial and industrial lands into productive uses. This includes redeveloping aging retail areas and industrial sites to their “highest and best use” whether for housing, employment, or civic purposes to strengthen Medford’s tax base and overall vitality.

Focus Areas

- Bear Creek Corridor (including Hawthorne Park and Bear Creek Park)
- West Main Gateway
- Downtown Medford
- Rogue Valley Mall/North Medford commercial areas

GOALS + OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Expand Housing & Mixed-Use Development

Focus: Greatly increase the availability of housing, particularly workforce housing in Medford’s urban core and corridors, while encouraging vibrant mixed-use development. This goal addresses the need for attainable housing and creates continuous-use corridors by mixing residential, commercial, and civic uses. Focus areas include Downtown Medford, the Bear Creek corridor near Hawthorne Park and Bear Creek Park, and other underutilized parcels where new housing over ground-floor retail or offices can thrive.

Facilitate Infill and Adaptive Reuse: Identify vacant or underused lots and buildings (e.g. surface parking lots or older structures) downtown and along corridors for residential or mixed-use infill. Provide incentives or partnership opportunities for developers to convert these sites into housing through adaptive reuse and new construction. Early efforts may include issuing RFPs for catalyst housing projects or assisting with pre-development costs on key parcels.

Mixed-Use Corridor Development: Support the revitalization of key corridors by pairing housing with small business activity. In areas like the Bear Creek corridor (e.g. near E. Jackson St.) and West Main Street, adjust zoning or provide grants to encourage multi-story mixed-use projects

(residential over retail/office). Initial efforts could include streetscape improvements and technical assistance to property owners to spark interest in mixed-use redevelopment.

Significantly Boost Downtown Residency: During the district's existence, add a substantial number of new housing units in and around downtown to support local businesses and street-level activity. Historic buildings should be rehabilitated, with upper floors converted to apartments or live-work spaces that contribute to an active, mixed-use environment. These efforts will align with the City's Downtown Master Plan and Climate Friendly Area (CFA) policies, reinforcing land use, housing, and transportation goals. By the end of the district, downtown Medford should have a strong residential base that keeps the area vibrant beyond standard business hours.

Bear Creek Corridor Revitalization: Transform the Bear Creek corridor into a lively mixed-use district that leverages the natural amenity of Bear Creek. In the long term, this area could host a mix of urban residential, hospitality, and entertainment uses around Bear Creek, Hawthorne Park, and Bear Creek Park.

Mixed-Income and Mixed-Use Corridors: By 30 years, key corridors (like West Main Gateway and South Riverside Ave.) will be redeveloped with a blend of housing, services, and employment. The West Main Gateway, stretching roughly from Oak Grove Road towards Downtown Medford will become an inviting western entrance to downtown, featuring townhomes or apartments and neighborhood-serving retail in place of aging strip malls or industrial yards. These long-range changes will be market-driven but guided by flexible zoning and strategic infrastructure upgrades to support higher-density, transit-accessible development.

Goal 2: Stimulate Economic Development & Workforce Retention

Focus: Proactively support business growth and job creation by readying land for development and aligning employment hubs with housing and transit. MURA 2.0 will use its tools to ensure that as Medford grows, it retains and attracts employers who provide quality jobs. This involves optimizing commercial land use (e.g. aging retail centers, vacant commercial parcels) and fostering modern employment centers. A major focus area is the Rogue Valley Mall and North Medford commercial area, as well as other employment nodes, to adapt them for the economy of the future.

Site Preparation for Key Employers: Utilize MURA funds to prepare sites and extend infrastructure in areas with high job-creation potential. Example, around the Rogue Valley Mall area, identify large, underutilized properties that could be redeveloped into office parks, tech/flex campuses, or mixed-use centers. Conduct master planning for a "North Medford Employment Redevelopment Zone" and invest in necessary improvements (ex. street access, utilities) to make these sites shovel-ready for private investment.

Align Jobs with Housing & Transit: Work with major employers, educational institutions, and Rogue Valley Transportation District to align job centers with housing and transportation access. In the near term, this means encouraging projects that co-locate workforce housing near employment (ex, supporting a housing development for students or staff if a new medical training facility or university branch locates in Medford).

Business Retention & Expansion Programs: MURA will serve as a partner in efforts to retain and grow businesses within the district. This role can support lead agencies by coordinating infrastructure improvements or public-private investments that enable business expansion or relocation. Collaboration with regional economic development, workforce, and business service organizations will help promote strategic sites and reinforce goals tied to Medford’s economic vitality and diversification.

Redevelop Aging Commercial Centers: Over the life of the district, assist in the redevelopment of aging commercial areas (such as older strip retail along Highway 99). The vision is to replace low-density, auto-centric layouts with modern mixed-use employment centers that integrate offices, retail, entertainment and even residential components.

Goal 3: Optimize Land Use – Industrial & Commercial Site Redevelopment

Focus: Convert underutilized or blighted industrial and commercial lands into more productive uses through strategic relocation and redevelopment. In some parts of the renewal area, older industrial activities or vacant warehouse sites may not represent the highest and best use of the land today. This strategy involves working with property owners to relocate viable businesses to more suitable locations within Medford and then redevelop those freed sites for new purposes such as housing, parks, or modern industries. By doing so, Medford can retain jobs while also repurposing key lands for higher-value development or community needs.

Identify Redevelopment Opportunities: Conduct an audit of the renewal area to evaluate underutilized industrial areas with redevelopment potential, targeting partly vacant, causing nuisance/blight, or significantly under-built. Prioritize sites that are adjacent to focus areas like downtown or corridors where a new use would have catalytic impact. Target at least one pilot area for site readiness and conversion planning that could be transformed into a mixed-use extension of the corridor.

Business Relocation Assistance: Design a relocation assistance program to help willing industrial business owners move from target redevelopment sites into more appropriate industrial parks or commercial zones. Using tools like phased relocation, land swaps, or infrastructure grants, MURA can ensure that these businesses continue operating while freeing their original sites for new development. In the short term, initiate discussions with one or two property owners about

such opportunities and secure agreements that tie relocation with site redevelopment commitments.

Environmental & Site Cleanup: Many older sites may face environmental cleanup or demolition needs. MURA will allocate funds for site remediation, demolition of dilapidated structures, and environmental assessments on key properties slated for redevelopment. Site cleanup initiatives can build momentum and signal to private investors that formerly blighted sites are now ready for redevelopment.

Phased Redevelopment of Industrial Land: Over the life of MURA 2.0, systematically convert several old industrial or commercially blighted pockets into new uses. This incremental, phased approach will chip away at blight site-by-site, repurposing into assets for the community. Some may become new residential neighborhoods or commercial centers. Others might turn into parks, public facilities, or modern employment campuses, depending on what the community needs and market supports.

Sustainable Land Use Pattern: The ultimate outcome is an optimized land use pattern in the renewal areas. Each key site will be utilized at its “highest and best use” as envisioned by the community and reflected in the Comprehensive Plan. Industrial activities that remain will be housed in appropriate, well-buffered locations, while areas near downtown, Bear Creek, and corridors will be free of incompatible uses. Medford will have achieved growth without outward sprawl by recycling inner-city land for new development, aligning with smart growth principles and maximizing the community’s return on investment in infrastructure.

Goal 4: Infrastructure Investment & Site Readiness

Focus: Invest in critical infrastructure upgrades and site preparation projects that remove barriers to redevelopment and set the stage for private investment. A core function of the urban renewal district is to fund capital improvements such as streets, utilities, and public amenities. MURA 2.0 will prioritize infrastructure projects that have a high catalytic return that directly support planned development or significantly improve an area’s appeal. MURA will take on site readiness tasks such as environmental remediation, grading, and property assemblage to create development-ready sites attractive to the market. These efforts underpin all the other goals by creating the conditions in which housing, economic development, and private projects can flourish.

Address Known Barriers: Immediately tackle known infrastructure deficiencies that impede development in the focus areas. Example, if a parcel along the Bear Creek Greenway lacks adequate flood protection or stormwater management, MURA can fund a regional stormwater facility or creek bank improvements to mitigate flood risk. If sewer or water line capacity is insufficient in the West Main corridor to support new housing, upgrade those utilities within the first few years.

Align with Capital Plans: Coordinate MURA infrastructure investments with the City’s broader Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to ensure strategic alignment with other public priorities. In the short term, establish a process with Public Works and Parks wherein MURA can contribute funding to planned projects within the renewal area. Example, if the City has a project to rebuild a section of West Main or improve Hawthorne Park, MURA funds can be added to expand the scope or enhance the design (streetscape, lighting, etc.). This alignment avoids duplication and stretches resources. MURA participation could help add pedestrian amenities or intersection upgrades beyond the basics.

Site Assembly and Prep: Initiate a site readiness program that targets a handful of high-potential development sites for preparatory actions. MURA can facilitate assemblage by negotiating with owners or offering fair purchases. Example, a cluster of neglected lots near the Rogue Valley Mall could be combined into a single 5-acre development site, greatly increasing its appeal for a mixed-use project. By 2028, aim to have at least 2–3 key sites in “build-ready” condition (clear title, infrastructure at the doorstep, environmental issues resolved) and actively being promoted for private projects.

High-Return Investments: Consistently target improvements to areas with the greatest potential for return on investment. MURA will focus its finite resources on infrastructure that directly enables significant private investment or community benefit. Example, extending a road and utilities into a large vacant tract could enable a new housing subdivision or commercial center, generating tax increment and meeting housing needs. Prioritizing such projects over less critical ones ensures the TIF district yields tangible results.

Resilient and Modernized Utilities: Long-term infrastructure work will also emphasize resiliency and modernization. MURA can model green infrastructure best practices to handle stormwater and beautify streets. Power lines in key pedestrian areas may be placed underground for safety and aesthetics. Aging water, sewer, and broadband systems will be brought up to modern standards so that future development isn’t constrained by outdated infrastructure.

Goal 5: Downtown & Corridor Activation

Focus: Strengthen Downtown Medford as the heart of the city and actively enhance key corridors and gateways leading into downtown. This goal focuses on boosting the vitality of downtown’s core (Central Business District) through adaptive reuse, historic preservation, and public space improvements, as well as extending that energy outward along primary gateways corridors like West/East Main Street, East Jackson/4th Street, and Central Avenue/South Riverside Avenue. By activating these areas, Medford will present a cohesive, attractive environment for businesses, residents, and visitors, supporting tourism, culture, and community identity.

Adaptive Reuse of Downtown Buildings: Provide technical and financial assistance for the rehabilitation of older and historic buildings in downtown, helping property owners bring vacant or underused spaces back to life. In the near term, this could include expanding the facade improvement grant program, continue seismic retrofit grants/loans, and helping with code upgrades to enable upper-floor residential or new restaurants in historic structures.

Public Space and Streetscape Enhancements: Continue to invest in downtown's public realm to make it more inviting and pedestrian-friendly. In the short term, extend the coordinated street furniture, lighting, and landscaping improvements that have been successful in the core. For instance, improve additional blocks of Main Street, Central Avenue, Riverside Avenue and adjacent alleys with decorative lighting, planters, public art and wayfinding signage. Support downtown's emerging plaza and park spaces with programming or small capital additions (water features, stage, etc.) to encourage regular community use. These enhancements create a sense of place and encourage people to spend time (and money) downtown, aiding local businesses.

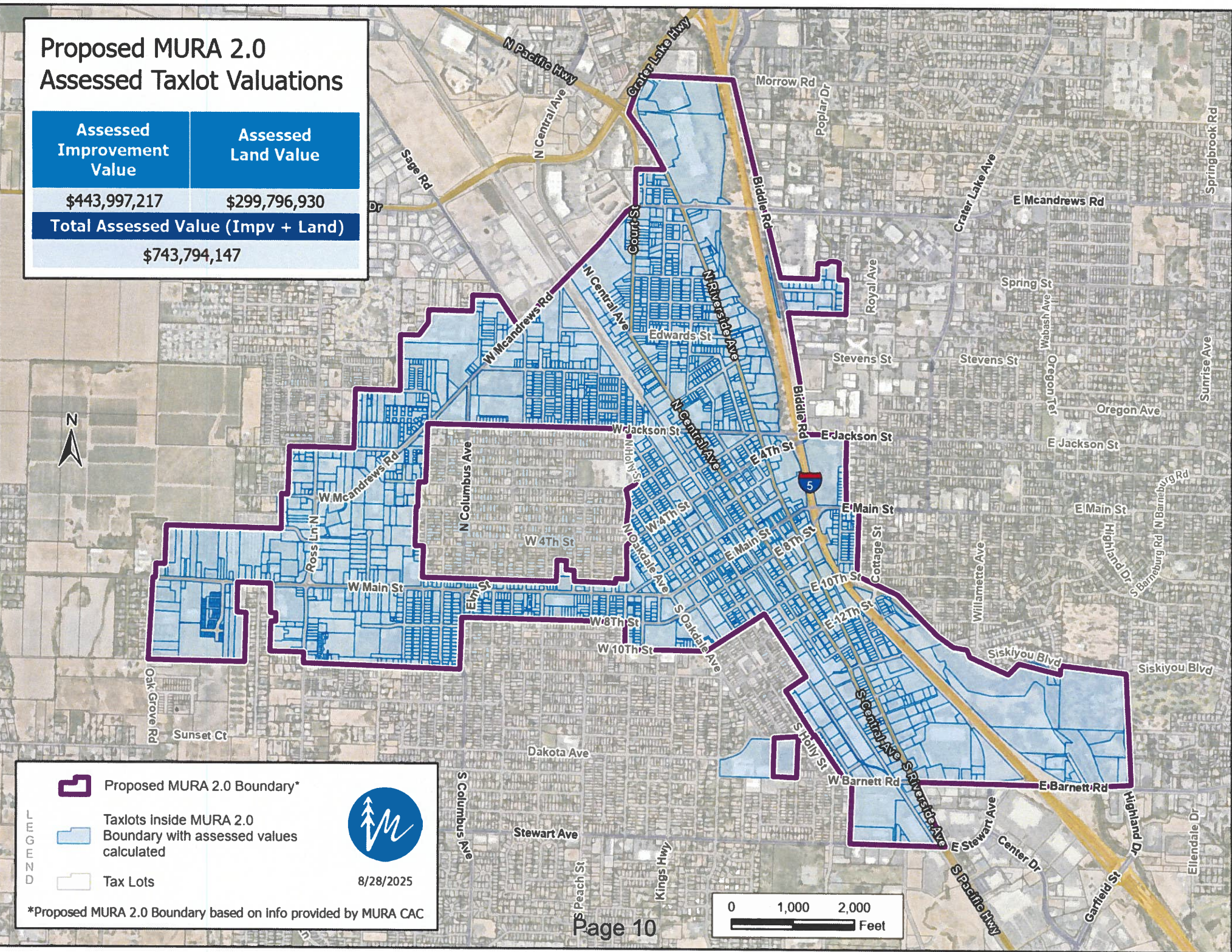
Thriving, Mixed-Use Downtown Core: In 30 years, downtown Medford should be a vibrant mixed-use district that serves as a regional hub for business, culture, entertainment, and urban living. The long-term objectives include maintaining a healthy mix of uses such as offices, ground-floor retail and restaurants along Main and Central, arts and cultural venues, and a growing residential presence on upper floors and adjacent blocks. With MURA's support, downtown will see new construction on remaining vacant lots and structured parking to replace surface lots as needed. Importantly, downtown's historic character will be preserved even as new architecture is woven in, conserving the city's heritage.

Corridor Redevelopment and Connectivity: Medford's main corridors and gateways will be greatly improved and activated. The West Main Street corridor west of downtown will be redeveloped with a combination of commercial and residential projects, shedding its past blighted spots and becoming an attractive urban boulevard welcoming visitor from the west. Streets like Riverside and Central (Highway 99) to the south will be safer and more visually appealing, possibly with a redesigned streetscape that calm traffic and better integrates with surrounding development.

Cultural and Entertainment Anchors: To draw people into downtown and the corridors, MURA will support the establishment of new cultural or entertainment anchors. In the long run this could include a multi-purpose events center and/or a conference center. Such facilities would create year-round activity and make Medford a destination, amplifying the economic impact of renewal. While these large projects depend on many factors, the long-term vision accommodates them as transformative opportunities. By 30 years, downtown Medford and its connecting corridors should boast an array of attractions and community assets, making the city center the vibrant heart of the Rogue Valley.

Proposed MURA 2.0 Assessed Taxlot Valuations

Assessed Improvement Value	Assessed Land Value
\$443,997,217	\$299,796,930
Total Assessed Value (Impv + Land)	
\$743,794,147	



LEGEND

- Proposed MURA 2.0 Boundary*
- Taxlots inside MURA 2.0 Boundary with assessed values calculated
- Tax Lots

8/28/2025

*Proposed MURA 2.0 Boundary based on info provided by MURA CAC



CAC Process & Who's Been Involved

- **8-member CAC: 2 Councilmembers + 6 Community reps:**
 - City Council: Jessica Ayers, Nick Card
 - Community Rep: Jerryck Murrey, Eli Matthews, Brad Earl, Randy Weber, Eric Stark and Daniel O'Connor.
 - Staff: City Manager's Office, Harry Weiss
- **Met over past year, reviewed:**
 - Boundary and sub district areas
 - Current MURA Goals/objectives
 - Alignment with citywide planning (City Council Biennial Goals, 2040 Vision, CFAs, Downtown Master Plan)

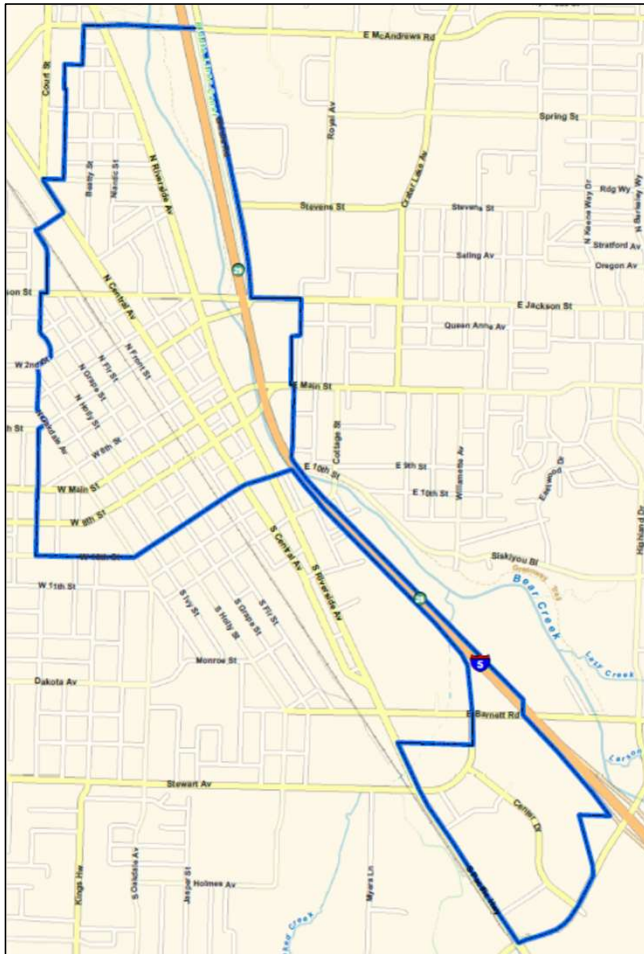
MURA 2.0 – CAC Recommendation

- **Move forward with next phase based on:**
 - Governance (7 member board)
 - Map
 - Goals and Objectives

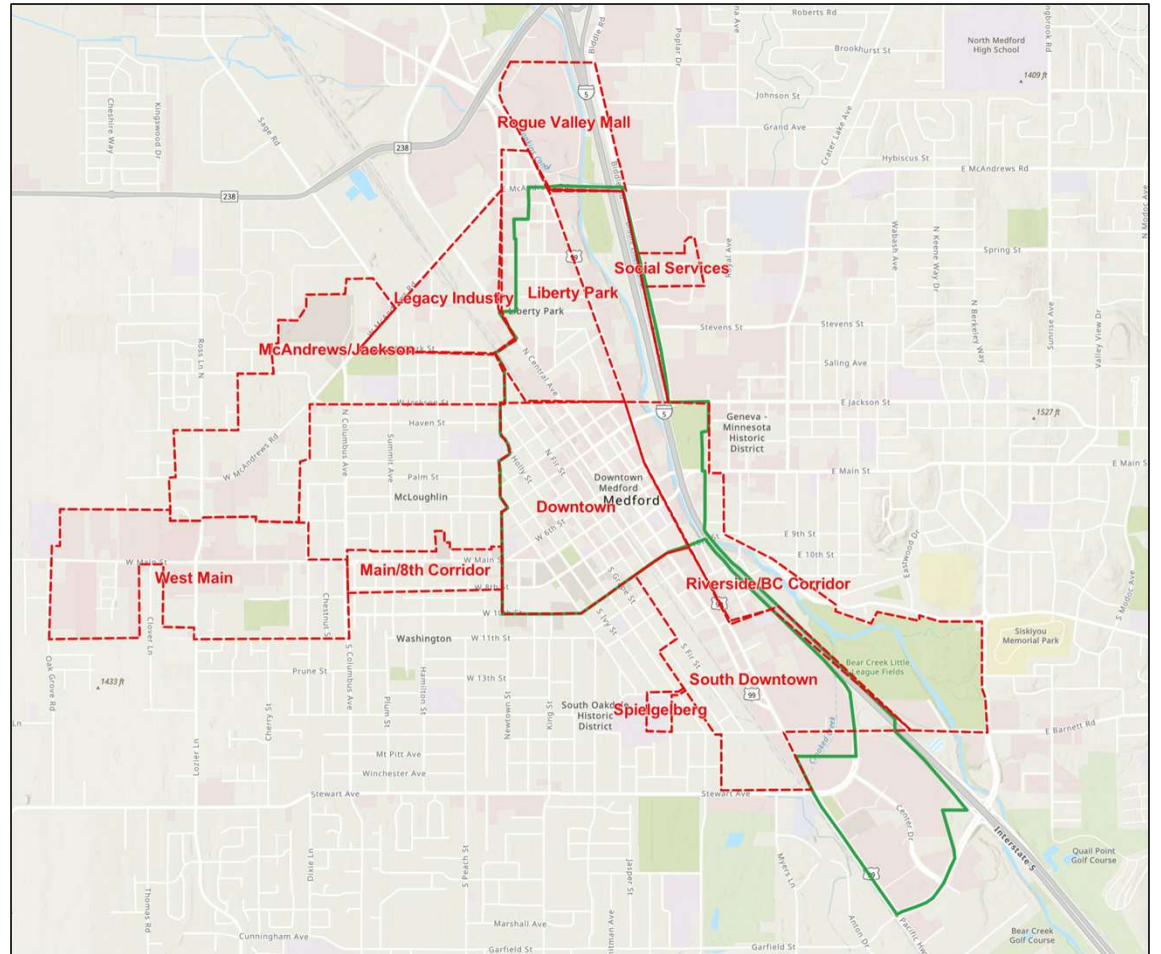
GOVERNANCE

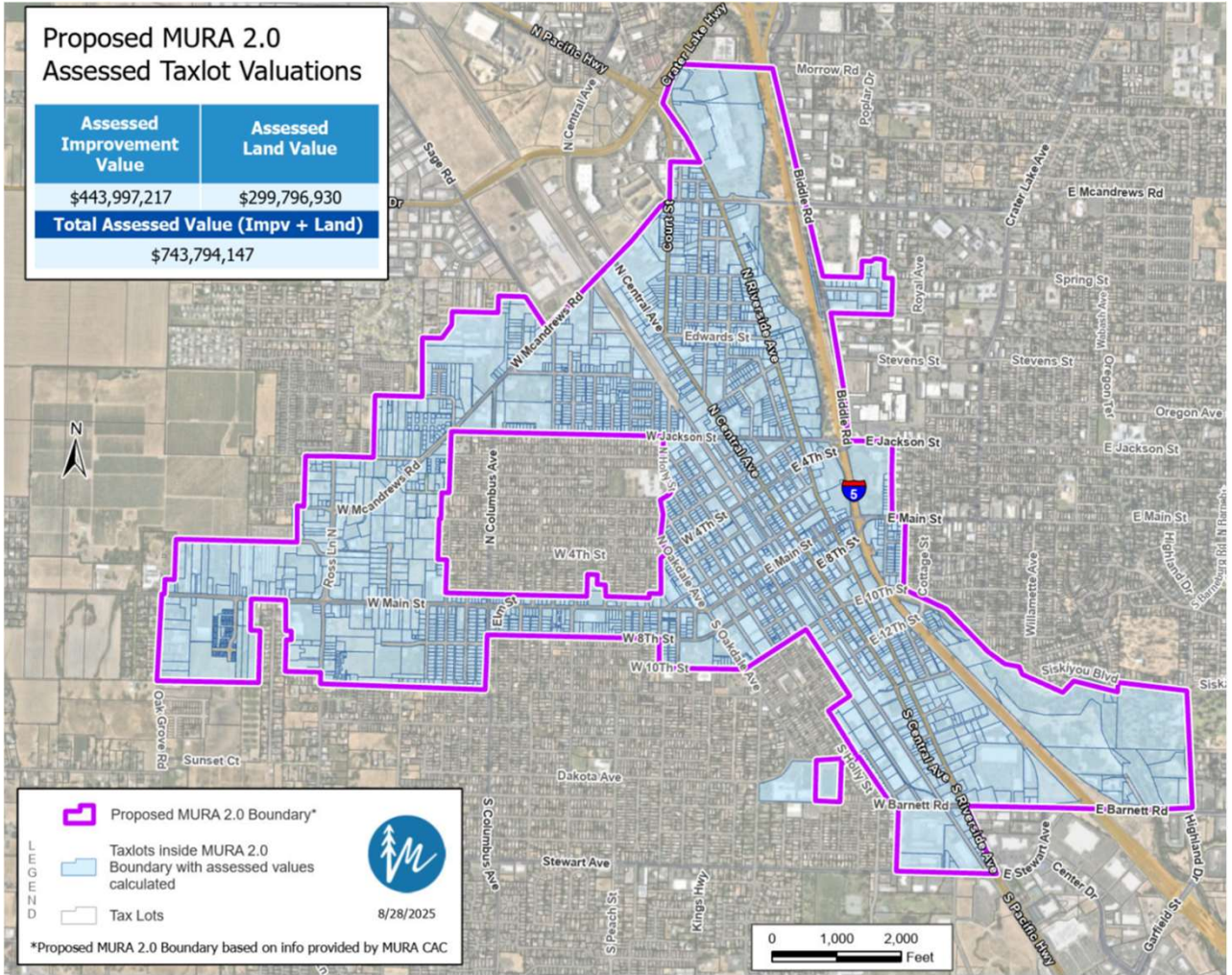
- Recommend a hybrid board: 2 City Council members + 5 at-large residents representing housing, business, and community perspectives
- This model maintains public accountability, ensures broader input, and keeps MURA 2.0 aligned with citywide goals over time

Current MURA



MURA 2.0





MURA 2.0 TIF Revenue Projections

Year(s)	3% Growth	3.5% Growth	4% Growth	4.5% Growth
1	\$332,788	\$388,212	\$443,718	\$499,183
2	\$675,560	\$790,054	\$905,184	\$1,020,828
3	\$1,028,616	\$1,205,960	\$1,385,110	\$1,565,948
4	\$1,392,262	\$1,636,423	\$1,884,232	\$2,135,598
5	\$1,766,819	\$2,081,953	\$2,403,319	\$2,730,883
6-10	\$14,857,734	\$17,657,985	\$20,559,399	\$23,564,602
10-15	\$26,058,280	\$31,382,156	\$37,030,247	\$43,020,196
16-20	\$39,042,781	\$47,682,166	\$57,069,552	\$67,265,406
Total	\$85,154,841	\$102,824,907	\$121,680,761	\$141,802,645

MURA 2.0 Policy Drivers & Goals

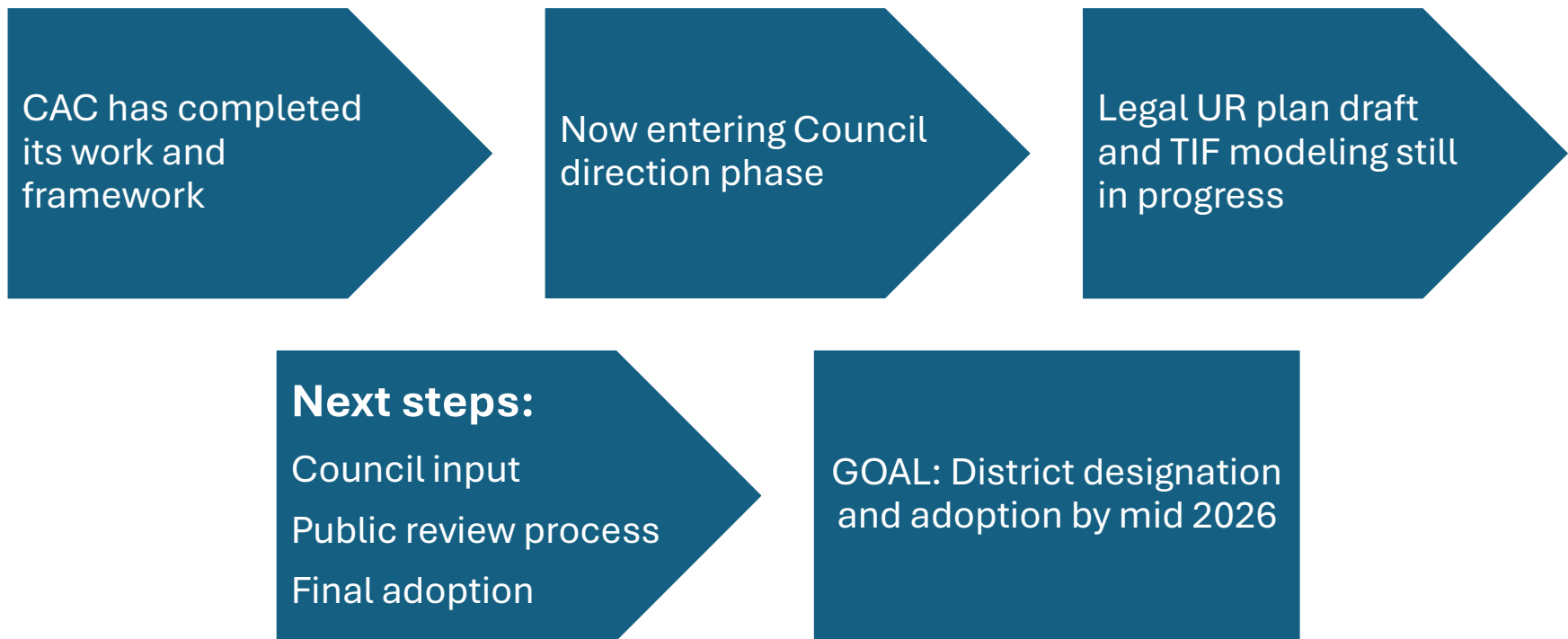
- **Development Drivers:**

- A. Workforce
- B. Housing
- C. Economic and Land Use

- **Goals**

1. Expand Housing & Mixed-Use Development
2. Stimulate Economic Development & Workforce Retention
3. Optimize Land Use – Industrial & Commercial Site Redevelopment
4. Land Infrastructure Investment & Site Readiness
5. Downtown & Corridor Activation

Where We Are Now



Support CAC's involvement in the next phase of MURA 2.0 to deliver a complete adoption recommendation.