

MOUNT AIRY

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN



AUGUST 2022



MOUNT AIRY



MOUNT AIRY

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED

MOUNT AIRY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

_____, 2022



MOUNT AIRY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CITIZENS OF MOUNT AIRY

A special thanks to the many residents and business owners that participated during this process, helping shape the future of downtown.

PREPARED BY

BENCHMARK PLANNING



MOUNT AIRY

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Downtown Mount Airy is the centerpiece of the community, offering a wide variety of retail, restaurants, art, and entertainment for residents and visitors alike. For over four decades, the City has worked diligently to improve and maintain downtown, working with property owners to establish one of the first municipal service districts in North Carolina, and utilizing that opportunity to fund special projects such as public parking, facade grants, and enhanced services to maintain a clean and safe downtown. Downtown's long-term success has been guided and cultivated through proactive management and consistent leadership provided by Mount Airy Downtown, Inc., business and property owners, volunteers, and elected officials.

As a result of this sustained commitment to maintaining a vibrant and healthy city center, the downtown continues to attract new private investment. Since the City joined the North Carolina Main Street Program in 2013, the total taxable building and property value has increased by nearly 55% downtown; growing from \$35.7 million to \$55.3 million over the last 9 years. In order to build upon these efforts, the City of Mount Airy began the process to develop this Master Plan in November of 2021.

▼ FIGURE 1.1 BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE 52ND ANNUAL AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL IN DOWNTOWN



MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Master Plan process was guided by a steering committee and a core city team consisting of downtown business and property owners, a downtown resident, a city commissioner, city staff, and Mount Airy Downtown, Inc., staff and board members. The Plan was developed over 9 months and included the major milestones listed below.

▼ TABLE 1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	DATE
Project Kickoff with Board of Commissioners	November 4
Project Kickoff with Steering Committee & Core City Team	December 8
Online Public Survey	January 1 - 31
Listening Sessions	January 26 - 27
Downtown Assessment Presented to Steering Committee & Core City Team	March 2
Downtown Assessment Presented to Board of Commissioners	March 3
Downtown Public Workshop #1 - Main Street Design	April 4
Downtown Public Workshop #2 - Pedestrians, Parking, & Opportunities	April 7
Downtown Public Workshop #3 - Summary	April 19
Workshop with Steering Committee & Core City Team	May 3
Workshop with Steering Committee & Core City Team	July 19
Presentation of Master Plan to Board of Commissioners	August 4
Downtown Master Plan Adoption	TBD

COMMUNITY INPUT

During the Master Plan development process, the broader community was engaged in several ways to gain additional input into the process. Over 480 people responded to the online public survey, which was open the entire month of January. The survey focused on specific initiatives underway or being planned, such as parking, Main Street design, and participants' concerns and ideas for the future. In addition to general community input, listening sessions were held with subject matter experts and stakeholders including, property owners, business owners, residents, elected officials, tourism and arts organizations, city department heads, volunteers, and others. About 55 people were interviewed as part of the listening sessions on January 26 & 27 at the Municipal Building. Public workshops were held on April 4, April 7, and April 19 at the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History. Approximately 40 people attended each public workshop to hear presentations and develop a general consensus on major ideas to move downtown forward. The public input received during each phase of the process guided the development of the Master Plan for presentation to the Board of Commissioners for their consideration.

▼ FIGURE 1.2 PHOTO COLLAGE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DURING THE DESIGN DOWNTOWN WORKSHOPS AT THE MOUNT AIRY MUSEUM OF REGIONAL HISTORY. OVER 40 PEOPLE ATTENDED EACH OF THE THREE WORKSHOPS ON APRIL 4, APRIL 7, AND APRIL 19.



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DOWNTOWN ASSESSMENT

OVERVIEW

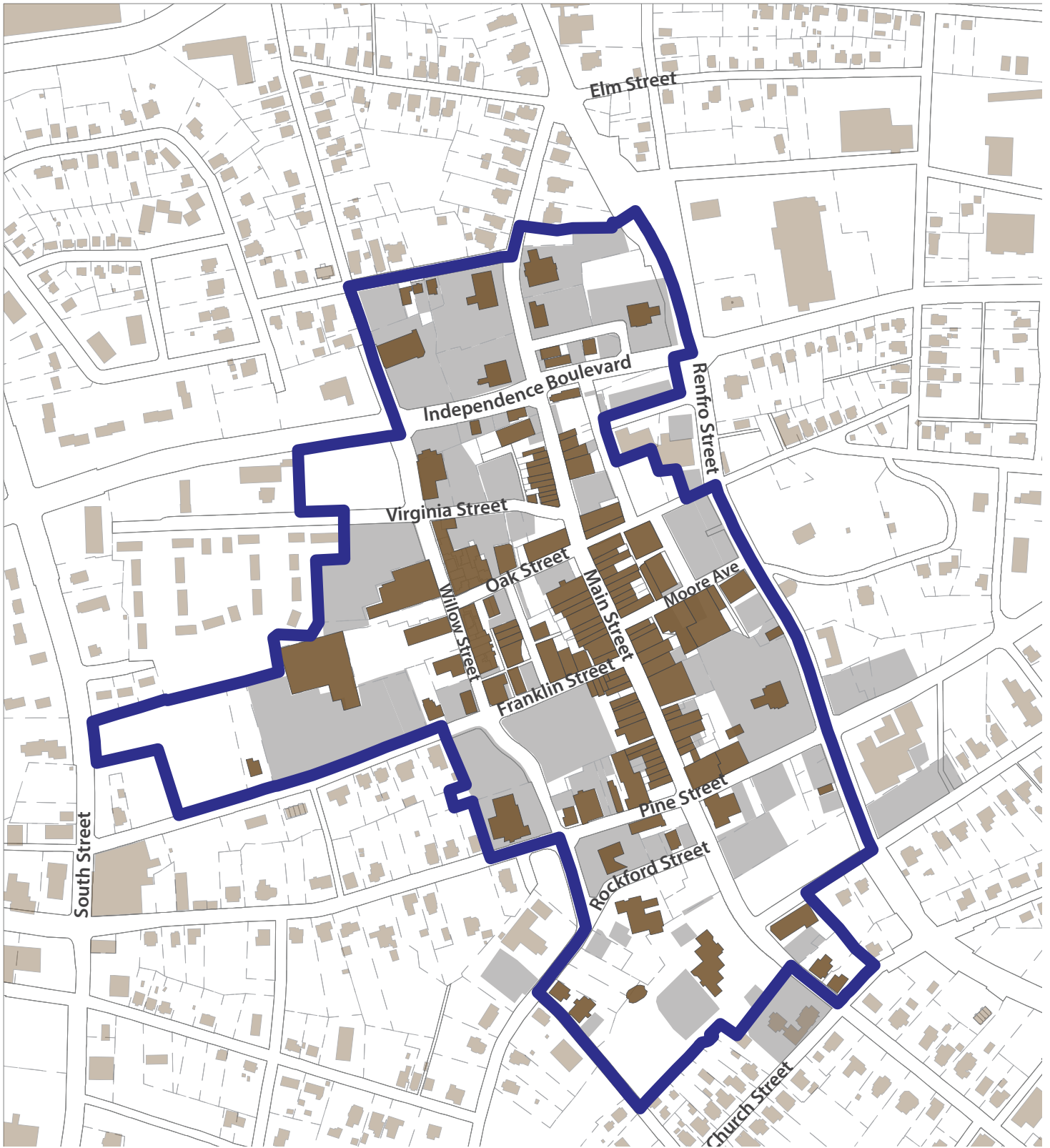
The assessment of Downtown Mount Airy included a variety of data and information collected from November 2021 through February 2022. The background information for the assessment included the public survey responses, listening session interviews, review of existing city and county geographic information system data, previous studies, and direct observation of existing conditions within the downtown area. As mentioned in the introduction section, the primary study area was the Municipal Service District (MSD) Boundary as identified on Map 2.1 on the following page.

STUDY BOUNDARY DEFINED

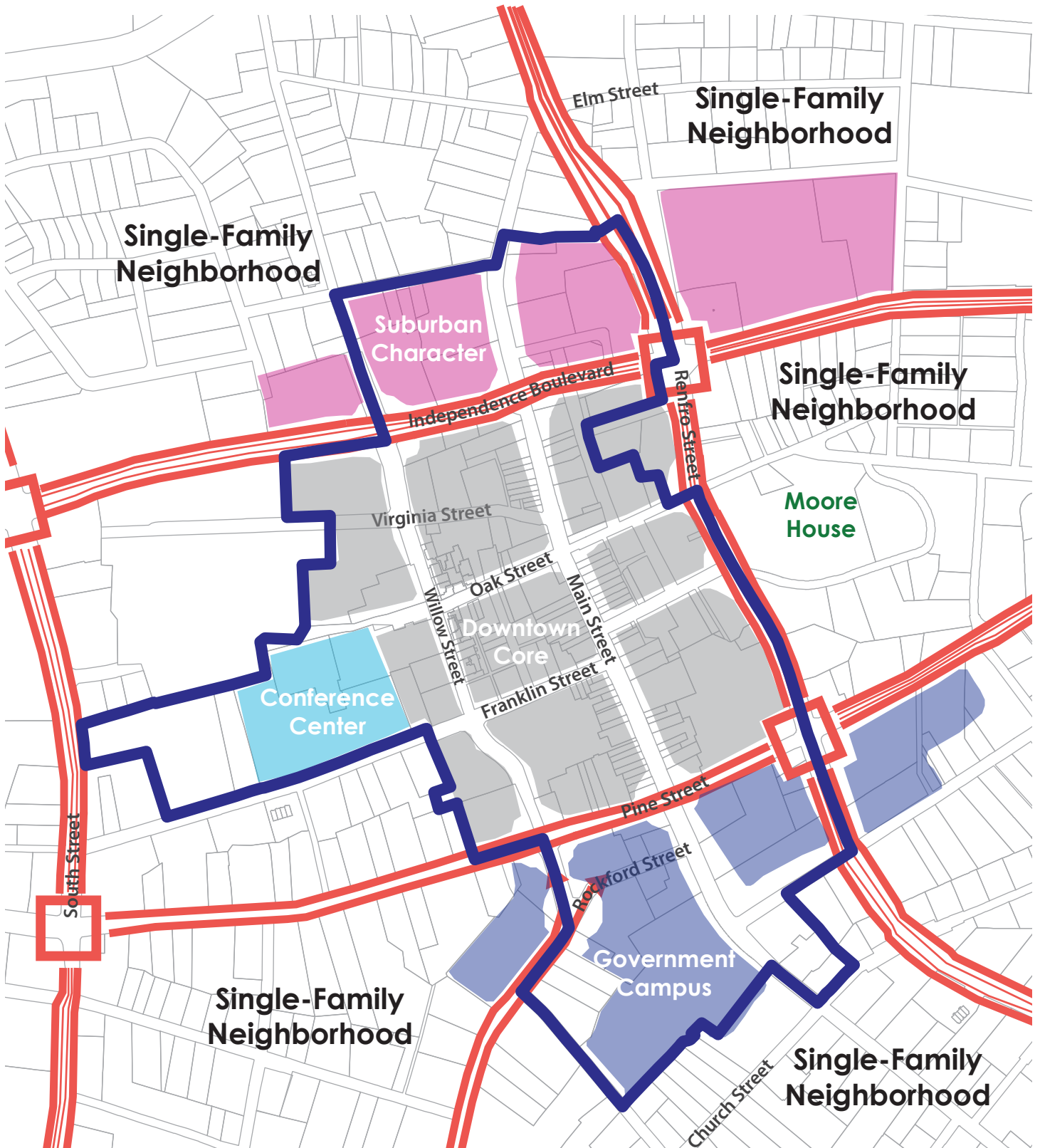
The MSD boundary (study area) covers approximately 86 acres, which includes approximately 21 acres of buildings and 34 acres in area reserved for parking. The northern boundary of the MSD extends along Rawley Avenue from the direction of Willow Street across to Renfro Street. The eastern boundary of the study mostly follows Renfro Street to Cherry Street where it meets the southern boundary, which generally follows the Municipal Building driveway (property line) and parking area until it meets Spring Street. The western boundary of the MSD is much more irregular in shape, running along Spring Street to Rockford Street, north on to Graves Street and eventually following Franklin Street westward to South Street. The western boundary then follows property lines eastward to include the former Spencer's Mill site following property lines northward across Virginia Street to Independence Boulevard to Willow Street where it joins Rawley Avenue.

URBAN FORM

As displayed on Map 2.2, the urban form of the study area extends outward from a central area described as the downtown core, which exhibits the characteristics that are expected within a downtown. The downtown core includes a wide variety of commercial and mixed-use buildings ranging from one to three stories. The area is also included as part of the Mount Airy Historic District that had its primary growth from 1880 to 1930 and its period of significance through 1962. The former Spencer's Mill site that is being planned for a conference center and hotel is immediately adjacent to the downtown core. The downtown core is bounded by four transportation corridors: Independence Boulevard, Renfro Street, Pine Street, and South Street. The area immediately across Independence Boulevard to the north has a much more suburban character, although, several of the buildings along Main Street are contributing structures to the Historic District. The areas of downtown to the south are characterized as government campus, which includes the Municipal Building, the Post Office and similar uses that are just south of Pine Street. Finally, the downtown area is surrounded by primarily single-family neighborhoods that provide a solid base of downtown users.



-  Municipal Service District
-  Existing Building Footprints
-  Parcels
-  Existing Parking Lots



Character Areas

- Grey square: Downtown Core
- Light blue square: Conference Center
- Pink square: Suburban Character
- Dark blue square: Government Campus

- Dark blue outline: Municipal Service District
- Thin white outline: Parcels



TYPES OF BUSINESSES AND USES

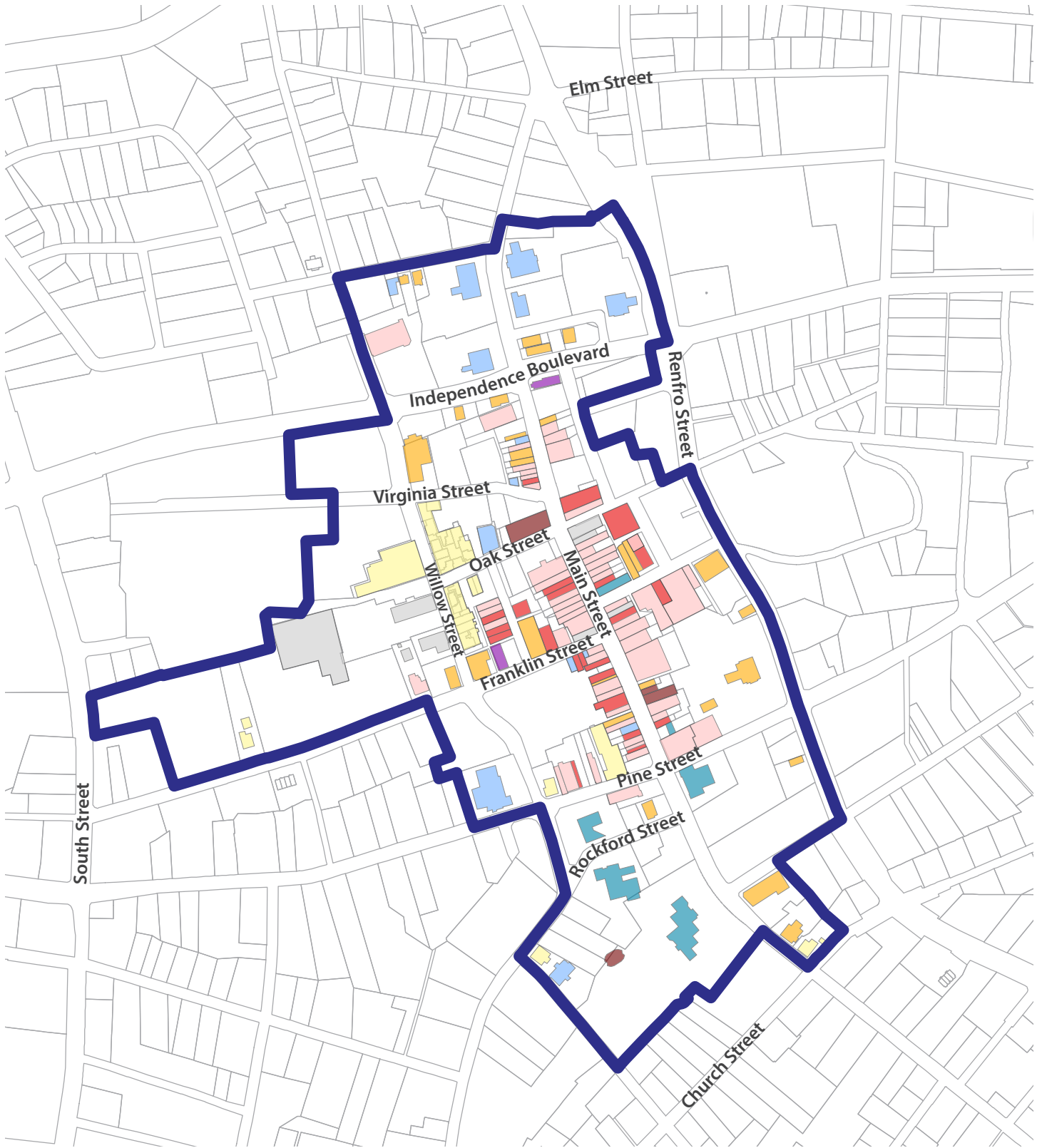
Approximately 55% of the downtown survey respondents indicated they are coming downtown several times a week or more, with 21% indicating they come downtown at least once a week. The majority of respondents specified they are primarily coming downtown to dine out/for entertainment (76%), to shop (72%), and to attend festivals/events (59%). So, it is no surprise that the primary first floor uses in downtown include retail establishments/stores, and food and beverage uses. Other first floor uses in downtown include office, residential and public/private institutional uses. Currently, downtown has a very high occupancy rate of 89%, with several vacant properties that are being redeveloped. This high level of occupancy and redevelopment activity demonstrates a strong demand for new space. In addition, many of the upper floor uses include residential, office, and/or storage. At this time approximately 14% of the upper stories are vacant.

VEHICULAR ACCESS TO DOWNTOWN

As described in the urban form section, the core of downtown is bounded by significant transportation corridors. There are two four-lane facilities bounding the northern and eastern edges of the core, Independence Boulevard, and Renfro Street. Each of these roads is designed to carry well over 25,000 annual average daily traffic (AADT) and currently operate well under capacity at 7,100 and 6,200 AADT respectively. Pine Street, which has two primary travel lanes with turn lanes, is a major corridor on the southern edge of the downtown core with 7,500 AADT. South Street is the western transportation corridor and only has 4,300 AADT.

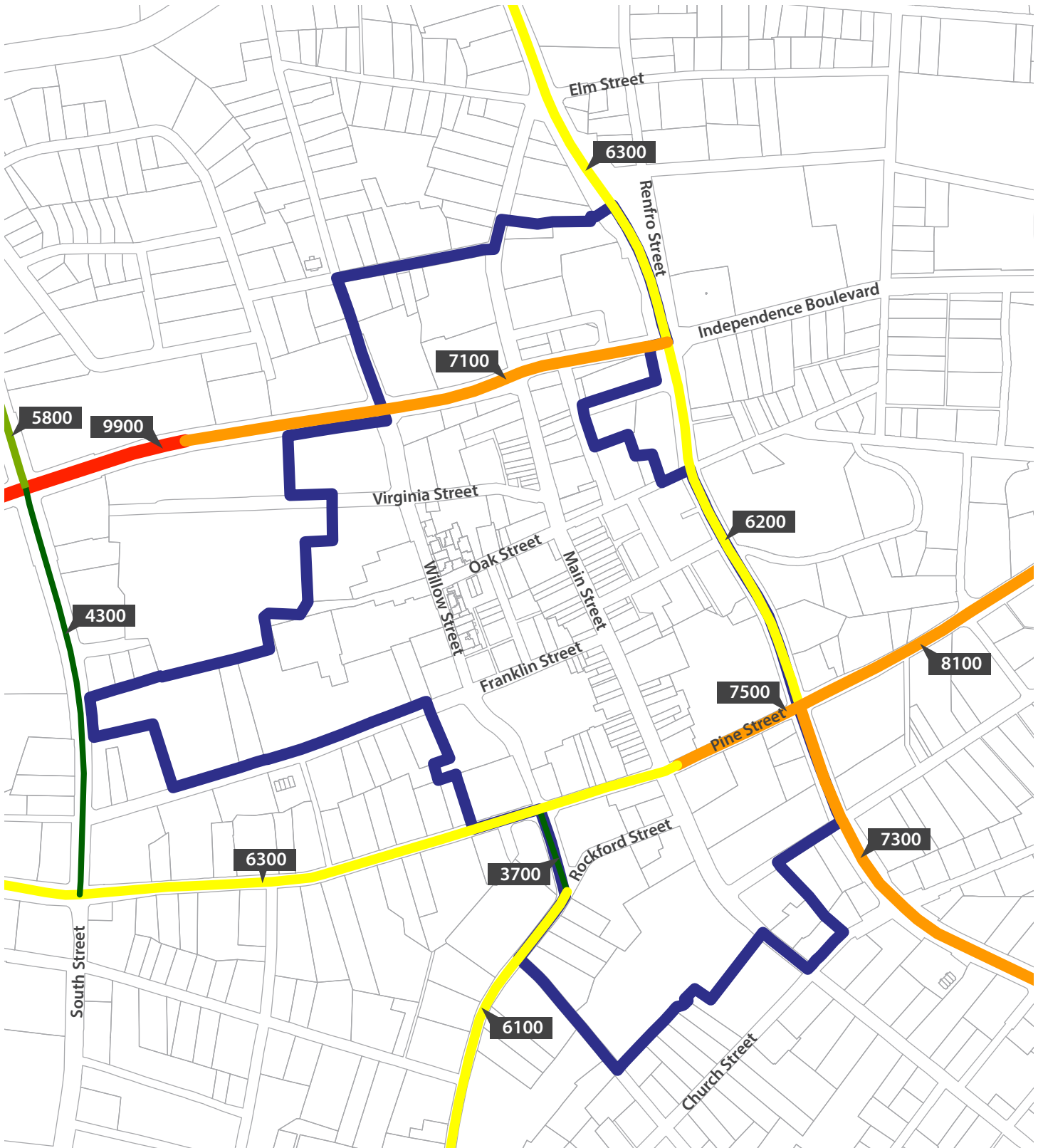
People traveling to downtown by vehicular means enter into the core of the downtown area by one of these bounding corridors, side streets, or from the north down Main Street, which is a one-way street with two travel lanes and on-street parking on both sides. This traffic pattern was established many decades ago when the mills were active, which led to the conversion of Main Street from two-way traffic to the current one-way configuration today.

Over the last 10 to 15 years, much discussion has revolved around Main Street and its current design and function. One of the questions on the survey presented a variety of potential options for the direction and flow of traffic on Main Street. Nearly all survey respondents indicated they wanted the direction of traffic to stay one-way. Of those one-way options, most favored keeping two lanes of one-way traffic as it is today, while some liked the idea of exploring one lane of traffic with angled parking and loading zones on one side. Only 6% of the survey respondents strongly liked the idea of converting Main Street back to the original two-way design.

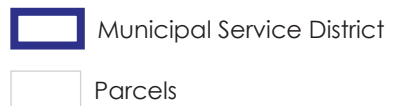


First Floor Uses / Business Types





2020 Traffic Count



PARKING

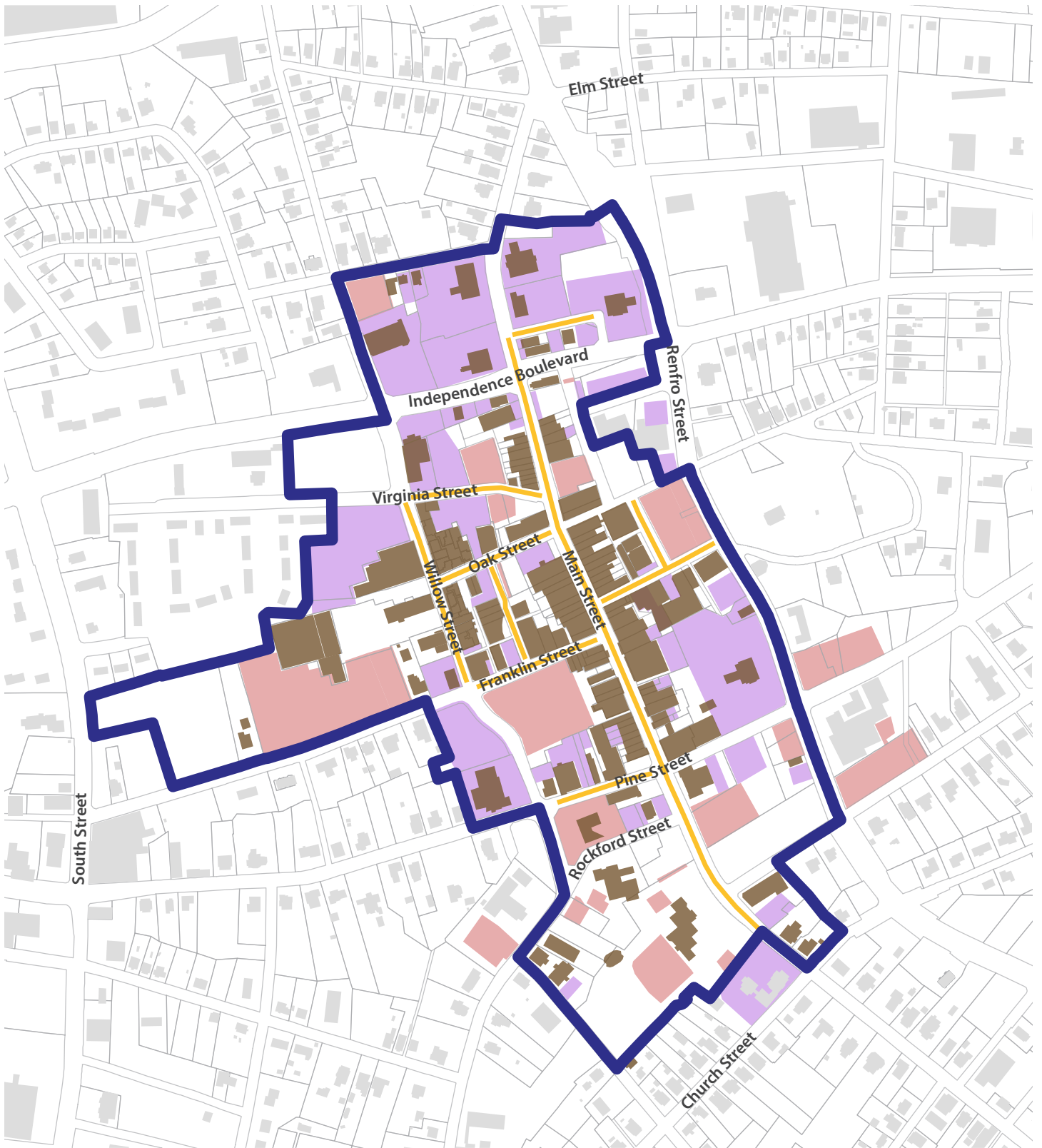
A high-level review of parking in downtown was conducted as part of the assessment. During the review and inventory of existing parking, a total of 2,343 spaces were counted in parking lots or on the street. Of those spaces, 343 were excluded from the available spaces as they are dedicated to public safety or the funeral home.

The 2,000 available parking spaces include 1,768 spaces in parking lots and 232 on-street spaces. There are 664 public spaces in parking lots with 1,104 private spaces in parking lots. The highest concentration of on-street spaces (81) are located along Main Street from Independence Boulevard to Pine Street.

When survey respondents were asked about parking downtown, 63% of respondents indicated that it was easy to park downtown. Over the years, the City has invested in downtown parking facilities with revenue generated by the MSD, helping ensure an ample supply of available, accessible, and well-maintained parking for downtown visitors. This has helped keep downtown strong and vibrant. While most respondents indicated parking was not an issue, there were 9% of respondents that indicated it was very difficult.

A brief snapshot of the current parking supply and demand was also considered as part of the assessment. Aerial images from online sources and from the County were observed to provide a very general count of cars in parking spaces throughout downtown. The observations revealed that 638 cars were parked in parking lots, which included 105 cars in the Franklin Street lot (66% occupancy) and 51 cars (45% occupancy) in the Moore Avenue lot along City Hall Street. The on-street spaces were occupied by 147 cars. On Main Street, 77 cars were observed (95% occupancy) with 17 cars parked on-street along Franklin Street (71% occupancy). This brief snapshot found an overall occupancy during a normal business weekday of 39%. Although parking demand far exceeds the number of available spaces during major events, generally there appears to be sufficient parking for the immediate future.

Finally, some of the survey respondents and persons interviewed during the listening sessions indicated that many of the spaces on Main Street were being occupied all day long by the same vehicles. As part of the review, vehicles on Main Street parked in on-street spaces were observed in the morning, during lunch, and at the end of the business day for several days over one week to determine if vehicles were remaining in the same parking spot as indicated. The observation found that 15 to 20 vehicles were parked in the same on-street spaces along Main Street all day. This significantly impacts parking perceptions and the availability of prime on-street parking spaces for potential customers.



Existing Parking and Structures

- Private Parking Lots
- Public Parking Lots
- On-Street Parking

- Existing Structures
- Existing Structures (Outside of Focus Area)

- Municipal Service District
- Parcels



PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLES

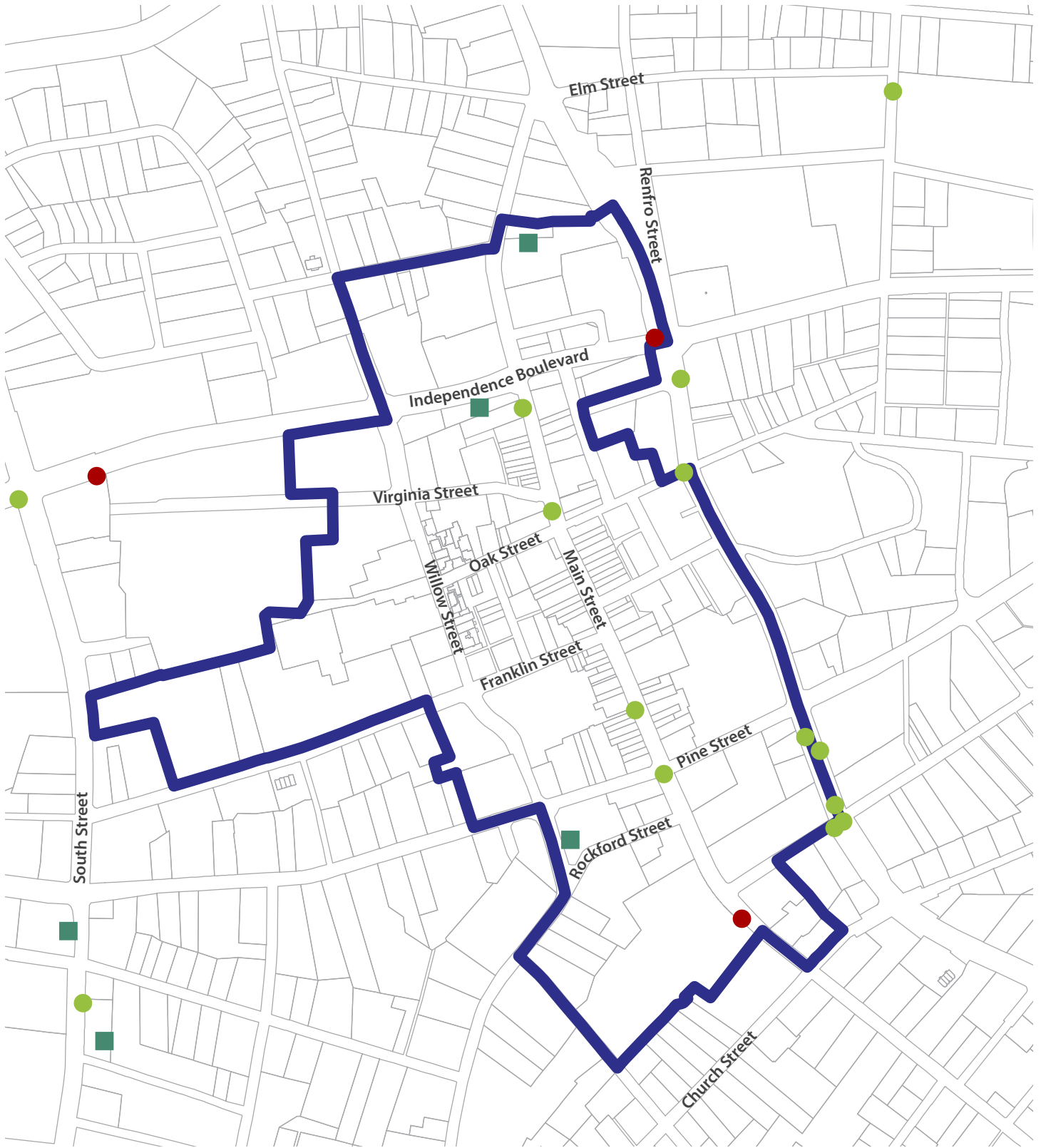
Regardless of how people arrive downtown, downtowns are places that people walk. Sidewalks were a necessity in the early beginnings of most downtowns and in recent years, people are returning to walking in downtown as a form of transportation and often exercise. In Mount Airy, sidewalks are found throughout the core of downtown extending into the adjacent residential neighborhoods. In the survey, one of the primary reasons people visited downtown was to walk for exercise. While the intersections from these neighborhoods into the core of downtown are dangerous, it has not discouraged surrounding residents from making that connection into downtown by foot. When observing the pedestrian crash data for Mount Airy, most pedestrian crashes with vehicles were observed at or near intersections along Main Street and on Renfro Street, especially near the Reeves Community Center.

Although Mount Airy has sidewalks on nearly every street in the downtown core, there are some significant challenges for pedestrians. One of the primary challenges is the width of sidewalks along many of the streets. Due to the physical constraints of the historic buildings and rights-of-way, and the steep topography, some of the sidewalks are much too narrow for two people to pass each other and often too narrow for one person where an obstruction, such as a utility pole, may be in the way. This also presents challenges to persons that may have a disability.

While not as popular as walking, some people do ride bikes around downtown. However, recreational bicycle enthusiasts and people utilizing bicycles as a form of transportation, mostly avoid Main Street as a primary route. The bicycle crash data reveals that most crashes were observed at only a few scattered locations outside the core of downtown.

▼ FIGURE 2.1 NARROW SIDEWALKS AND OBSTRUCTED SIDEWALKS AROUND DOWNTOWN





**2007 - 2020
Bicycle - Pedestrian Crashes**



- Pedestrian Crash On Roadway
- Bicycle Crash On Roadway
- Bicycle Crash Non - Roadway

- Municipal Service District
- Parcels

PUBLIC SPACES, PARKS, AND GREENWAYS

Mount Airy's downtown has several public spaces and parks in the core of downtown and surrounding downtown. These spaces include: Blackmon Amphitheater, Andy Griffith Museum grounds, Veteran's Memorial, Public Plaza/Restrooms, Franklin Street Alleyway Connector, Main/Oak Park, Market Street Arts and Entertainment District, and the nearby Moore House. Other major parks are located around the downtown with connection to the City's greenway system along the Ararat River to the east and Lovills Creek to the west. During the listening sessions, many of the survey respondents and interviewees expressed a desire to connect the two greenways through downtown in the future.

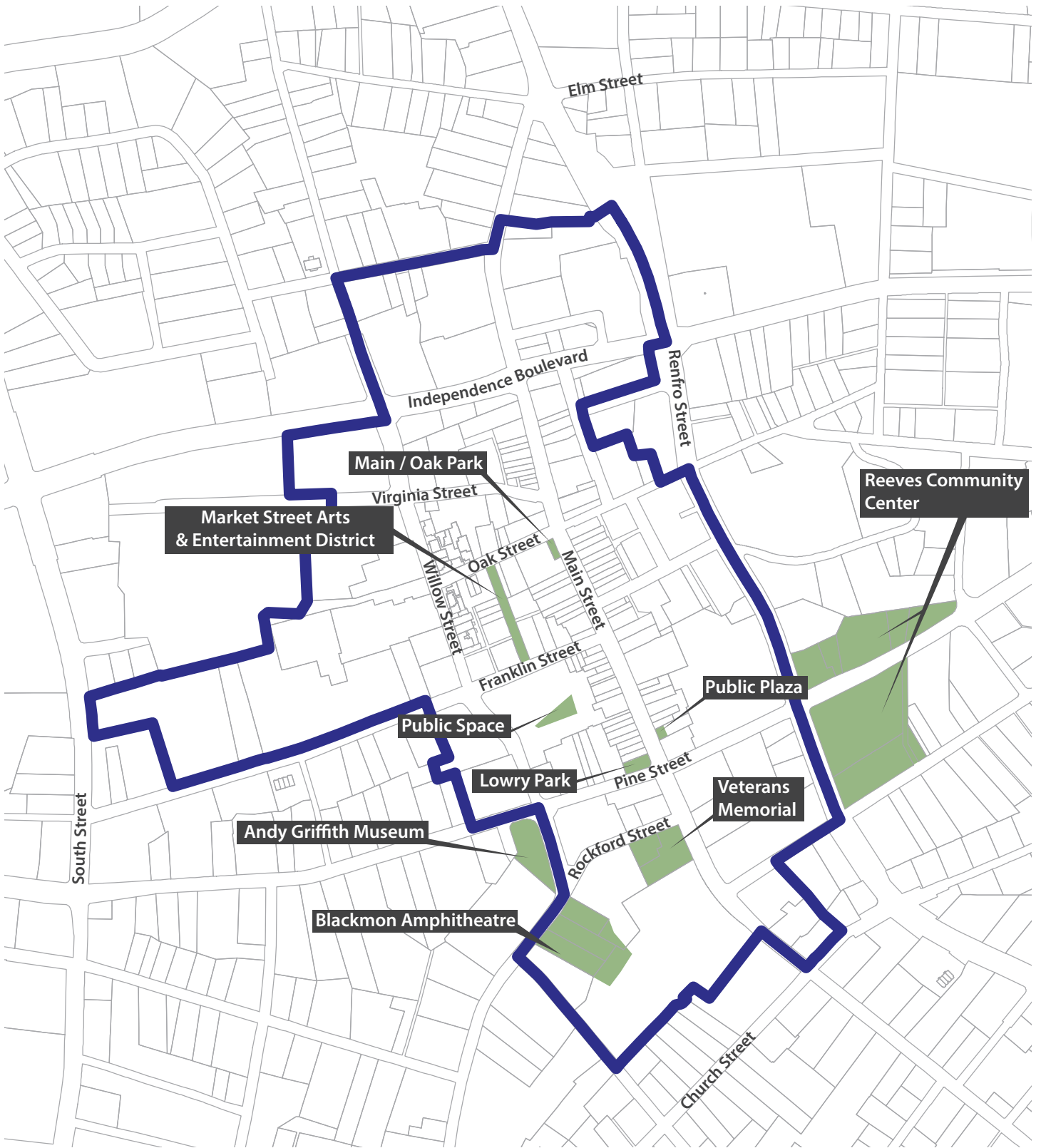
▼ FIGURE 2.2 MARKET STREET ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT






INFRASTRUCTURE

The downtown core is well-served by water and wastewater infrastructure. Main water lines are present along the major streets, including a main line that runs along the center of Main Street. The water line system has adequate capacity to serve existing and new development, although, some of the water lines have aged and will require upgrades in the coming years. The wastewater infrastructure is a gravity system with major lines in and around the downtown core that are connected to the backside of the Main Street buildings. These lines will also require significant upgrades in the coming years.

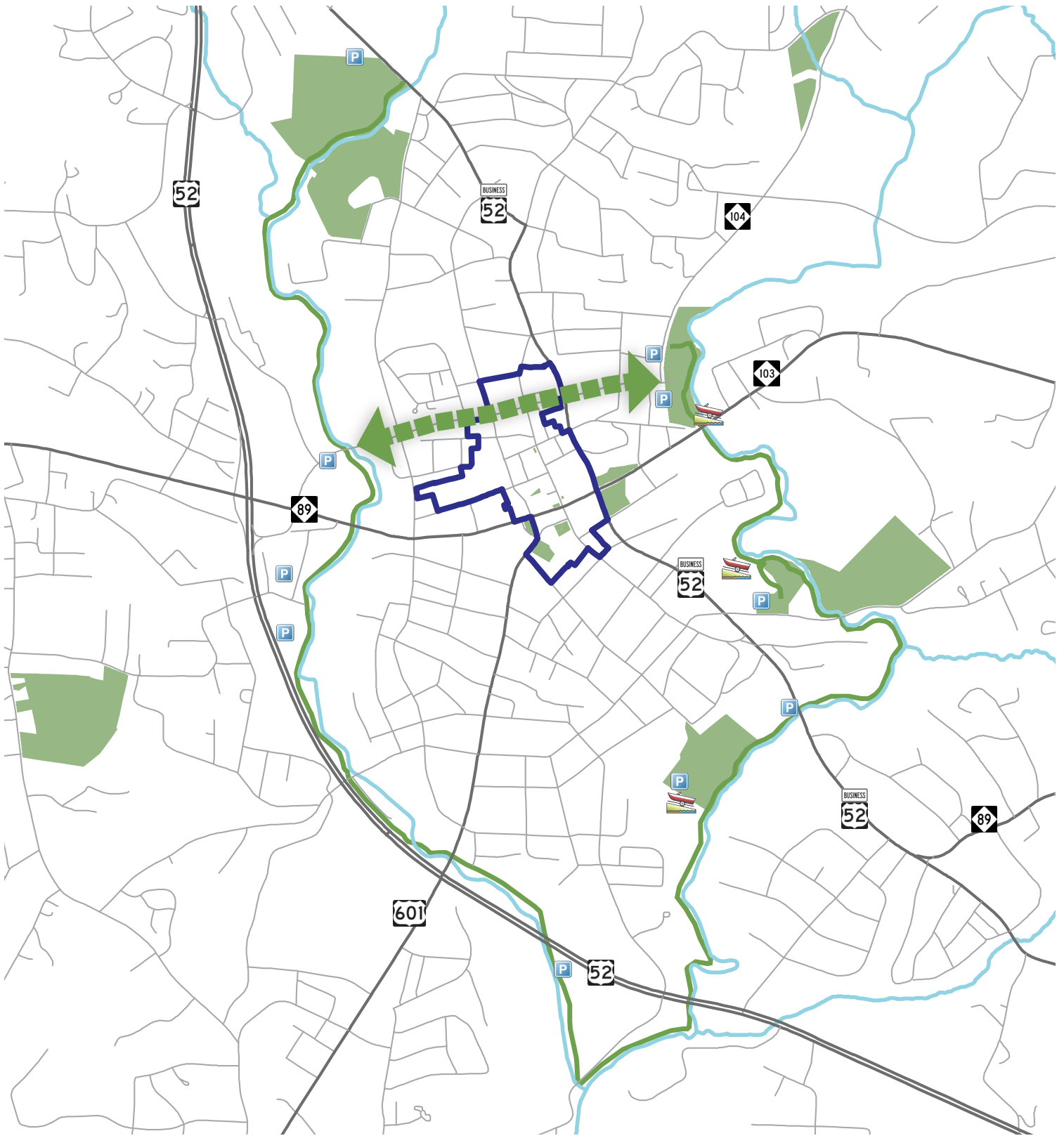
Downtown is also served by an above-ground fiber system that provides coverage throughout the entire downtown core outward into several of the adjacent neighborhoods and major transportation corridors.



Parks and Recreation

-  Municipal Service District
-  Parcels
-  Parks and Public Spaces





Greenways and Parks

 Parks

 Greenways

 Potential Greenway Connector

 Waterways

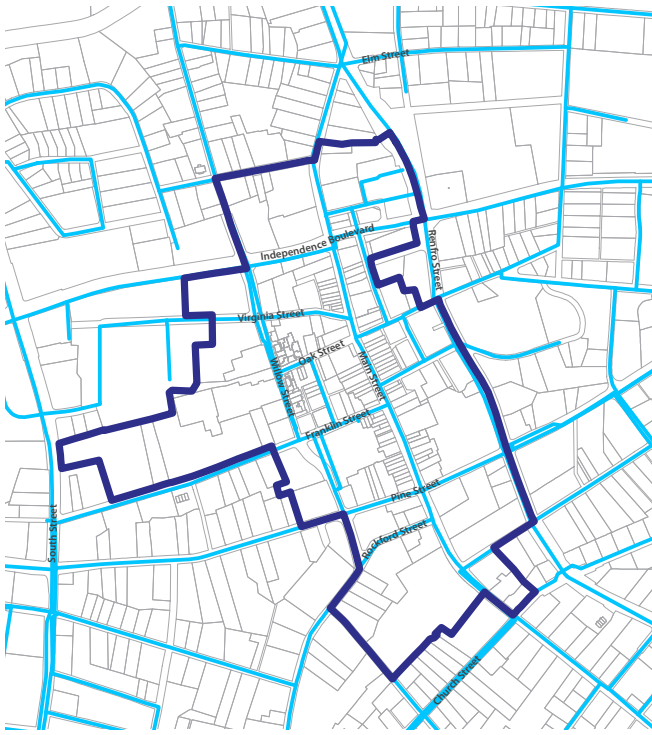
 Boat Access

 Parking

 Municipal Service District

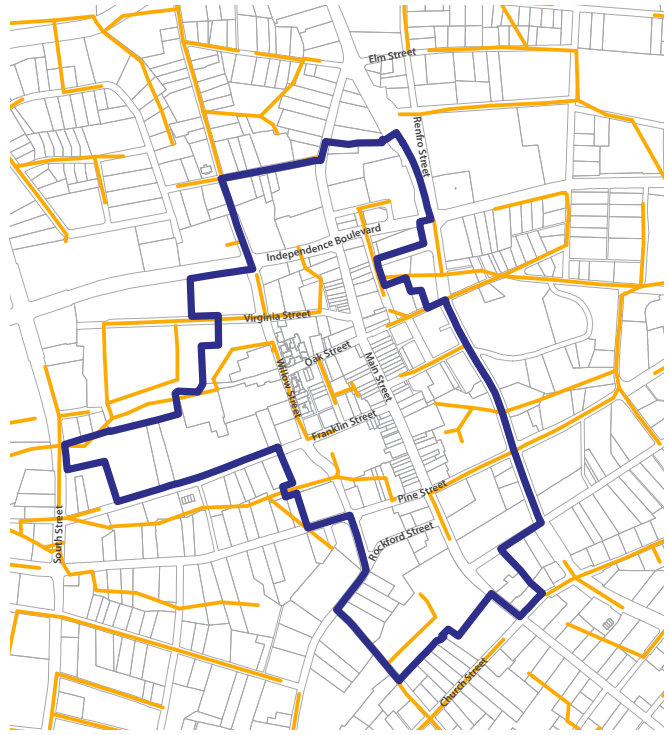


▼ MAP 2.9 WATER LINES



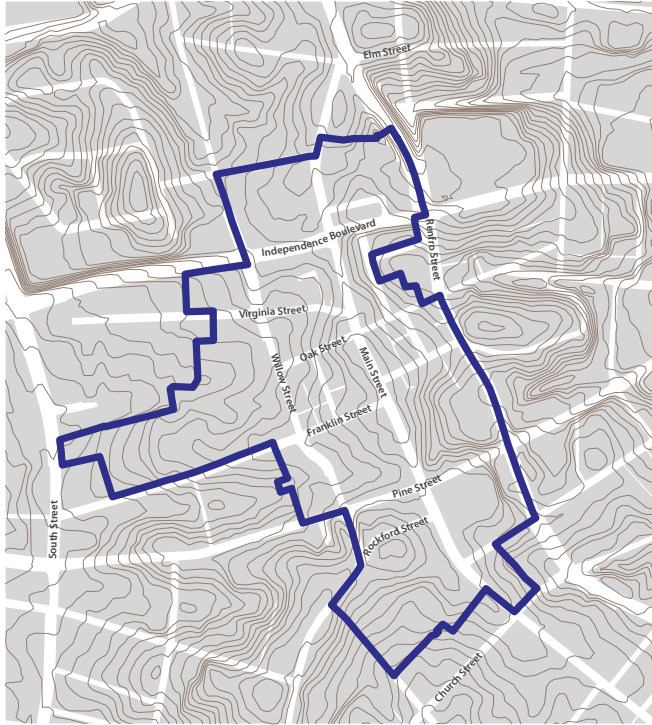
Water Lines

▼ MAP 2.10 WASTEWATER COLLECTION LINES



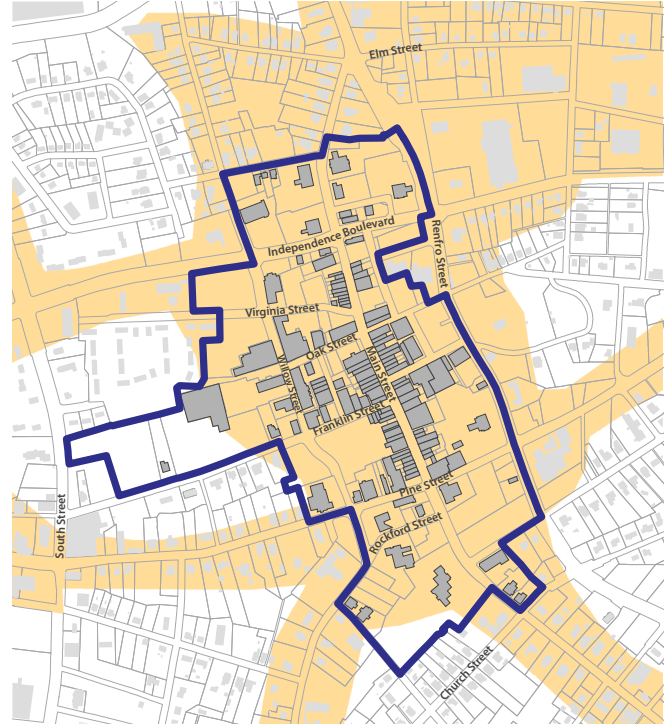
Sewer Lines

▼ MAP 2.11 TOPOGRAPHY



5 Foot Contour Lines

▼ MAP 2.12 FIBER SERVICE AREA



Fiber Service Area - Above Ground Level

TOURISM

The foundation of the tourism industry in Mount Airy centers around its branding as “Mayberry” - the symbol of small town America made popular by the Andy Griffith show. Mount Airy’s most famous son, Andy Griffith, put “Mayberry” on the map and often included the nearby Town of Pilot Mountain or “Mount Pilot” as referenced in the show. While many have speculated for years that the “Andy” draw would dwindle, people are still coming to see his hometown. Many of the baby boomers that grew up with the Andy Griffith show are retiring and have time and money to travel. So, for now, the draw of “Andy” seems to be going strong.

Although the number of people seeking out Mayberry and Andy is trending in a positive direction, the community has worked creatively to develop many other sectors of the tourism economy. Some of those tourism attractions include: wineries, breweries, outdoor activities, the mountains, festivals, and music. As discovered in the interviews, many tourists are now coming to Mount Airy for those emerging tourism attractions. While visiting for other reasons, they later learn about the Mayberry and Andy Griffith connection.

The major festivals and events drawing visitors and residents to Mount Airy include: the Autumn Leaves Festival, Budbreak Wine & Craft Beer Festival, Mayberry Food Truck Fest, Mayberry Days, Ghost Tours, Mayberry Spirits Whiskey Distillery Tours, Cruise-in’s, events and movies at the Earle Theater, Blackmon Amphitheater, Andy Griffith Playhouse, and Market Street Arts & Entertainment District.

The strong tourism sector produces a number of economic benefits for the community. It also produces a number of quality of life benefits for the City’s residents. Tourism in the downtown helps generate more economic activity, increasing shopping, entertainment, and dining options for the residents of Mount Airy. These types of businesses and options are not typically found in downtowns of similar sized communities.

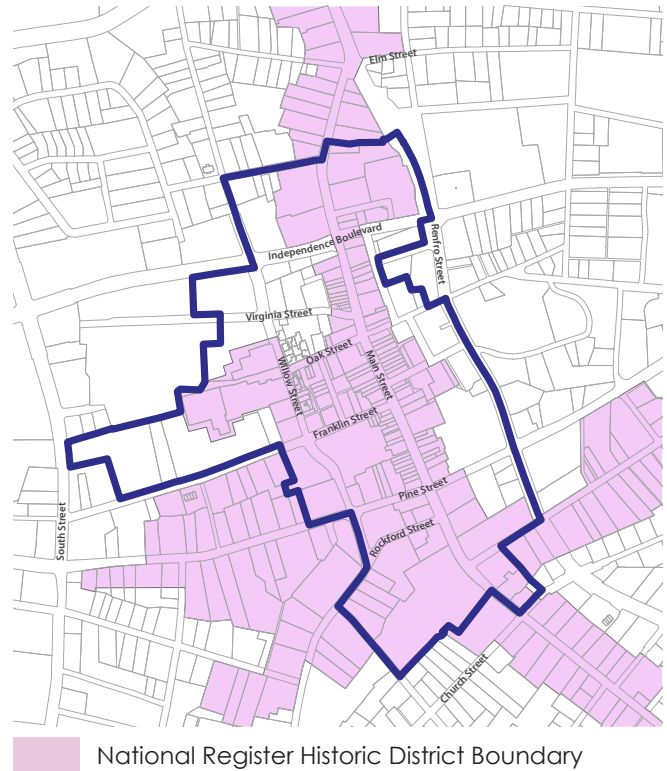
▼ FIGURE 2.3 BLACKMON AMPHITHEATER, EARLE THEATER, AND ANDY GRIFFITH AT THE ANDY GRIFFITH MUSEUM



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Mount Airy's downtown is a model for building a stronger community through preservation-based economic development. Many property owners in downtown have taken advantage of their properties being located within a national register district, utilizing federal and state tax incentives to renovate 13 historically significant buildings and properties in downtown. This has helped encourage an additional 28 building renovations that did not utilize tax credits. The historic preservation projects and renovations have included commercial spaces, residential units, restaurants, offices and many other uses. The preservation of these properties has helped maintain the history and beautiful architectural features of the downtown.

▼ MAP 2.13 NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT



▼ FIGURE 2.4 VIEW OF RENFRO LOFTS (HTC PROJECT), MARKET STREET (MULTIPLE HTC PROJECTS), SPENCER'S LOFTS (HTC PROJECT), AND SPENCER'S MILL / CONFERENCE CENTER & HOTEL SITE. PHOTO BY ADA DRONE CO.



CULTURAL RESOURCES

Many of the city's cultural resources are on display for appreciation by the local community and visitors alike. They play an important role in the tourism economy. Arts and entertainment venues abound including the Blackmon Amphitheater, the Earle Theater, the Andy Griffith Museum and Playhouse, the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, and the Surry Arts Council Arts Center and Siamese Twins Museum, which is under construction. As stated earlier, comparable communities to Mount Airy do not typically have this number of significant cultural resources and venues.

The downtown has several other cultural resources and attractions including a variety of murals such as Melva's Alley on Market Street and the Andy Griffith Mural on Moore Avenue. Public art in Mount Airy is continuing to develop and includes a variety of stops on its arts trail, highlighted by the Whittling Wall and Gazebo on Oak Street and recent improvements to the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District.

▼ FIGURE 2.5 MELVA'S ALLEY, FRANKLIN STREET FLOWER MURAL, REPAINTED GHOST SIGN IN THE MAIN STREET / FRANKLIN STREET ALLEY AND PUBLIC SPACE.



RECENT PROJECTS AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

Various projects have recently been completed, are underway, or are planned for the near future in downtown. Map 2.14 displays the type of project and location within the downtown.

ENTERTAINMENT

The Market Street Arts and Entertainment District is the most recent entertainment related project. Market Street is a short street connecting Oak Street and Franklin Street with a number of food and beverage and retail establishments fronting it. In 2020, as part of a COVID-19 economic recovery initiative, the City adopted an ordinance to close the street every weekend from May through October from 5pm on Friday evening through 7pm on Sunday evenings, creating a festival street with arts, music, food, and craft beers.

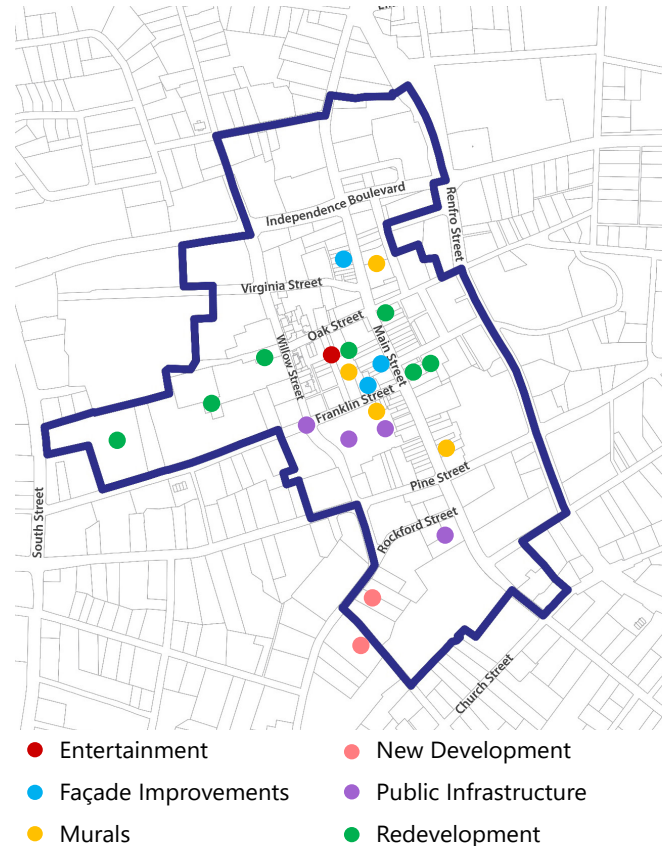
FACADE IMPROVEMENTS

The City has utilized MSD revenues to help fund facade improvements for several decades. As displayed on the map, recent facade improvements have been completed on Main Street and Franklin Street.

MURALS

In downtown, murals have played an important role in tourism, arts, and culture. Recent murals include the flower mural adjacent to the Franklin Street lot, the Easter Brothers mural in Jack Loftis Plaza on Main Street, the Andy Griffith Mural on Moore Avenue, and Melva's Alley in the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District.

▼ MAP 2.14 RECENT AND PLANNED PROJECTS



▼ FIGURE 2.6 RECENT BUILDING FACADE IMPROVEMENT



NEW DEVELOPMENT

The Surry Arts Council is constructing a new multi-purpose facility along Rockford Street overlooking the Blackmon Amphitheater that will include class room space, office space, and a new Siamese Twins museum. Other new development includes the Shepherd's House on Spring Street that provides transitional housing for persons in need within the community.

PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Recent infrastructure projects in the vicinity of Franklin Street include water line upgrades and sidewalk improvements, an enhanced alley connection from the Franklin Street lot to Main Street and a planned redesign and improvement of the Franklin Street lot. Another recent project includes the addition of parking between the Library and the Municipal Building.

REDEVELOPMENT

Several redevelopment projects are underway, including the former Spencer's Mill properties. A convention/conference center project planned for the site has received seed funding from the State and a developer is moving forward with a 70-room hotel project along Willow Street next to the Spencer's Mill Apartments. The site will include public space for a farmers market, an active play area and a small gathering space. Other properties in this area include the renovation of the Barrel Building to support smaller indoor events.

In addition to Spencer's Mill, redevelopment projects include two commercial retail spaces on Moore Avenue and a proposed overnight lodging use for the Main Oak building, which recently suffered the partial collapse of the third story.

▼ FIGURE 2.7 SPENCER'S MILL APARTMENTS



▼ FIGURE 2.8 PLANNED SPENCER'S MILL PLAZA



▼ FIGURE 2.9 SPENCER'S MILL REDEVELOPMENT PLAN



SPENCER'S MILL DEVELOPMENT
MASTER PLAN

sitework
STUDIOS

▼ FIGURE 2.10 CONVENTION CENTER PICTURED ON THE LEFT WITH THE 70-ROOM HOTEL ON THE RIGHT.



KEY FINDINGS - OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The Downtown Assessment culminates in a series of key findings that were identified as opportunities and challenges for consideration by the Steering Committee, Core City Team, and the public during the downtown workshops. Those opportunities and challenges are listed on the following pages.

OPPORTUNITIES

MAIN STREET

The initial responses from the community through the survey and listening sessions revealed a desire to improve the design and appearance of Main Street. A new design for Main Street is an opportunity to encourage more outdoor dining, trees and greenery, and an enhanced downtown experience. One item considered in the survey was the burial of overhead utilities, which 89% of the survey respondents liked. The widening of sidewalks where possible was favored by 86% of the survey respondents and the installation of street trees where practical was liked by 83% of the participants. During the survey, 94% of the respondents liked the idea of enhanced pedestrian crosswalks. When asked about replacing stop lights with stop signs where feasible, 53% liked the idea whereas 47% did not.

TOURISM

The creation of a new conference center and accompanying hotel at Spencer's Mill is a tremendous opportunity for the City to increase the tourism sector of the economy. New visitors coming into downtown will help generate demand for new businesses and help existing businesses remain viable. The opportunity for more overnight accommodations through boutique hotels and other lodging will help generate more visitors and foot traffic in downtown

▼ FIGURE 2.11 PEDESTRIANS AND DINING



▼ FIGURE 2.12 HOTEL SITE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

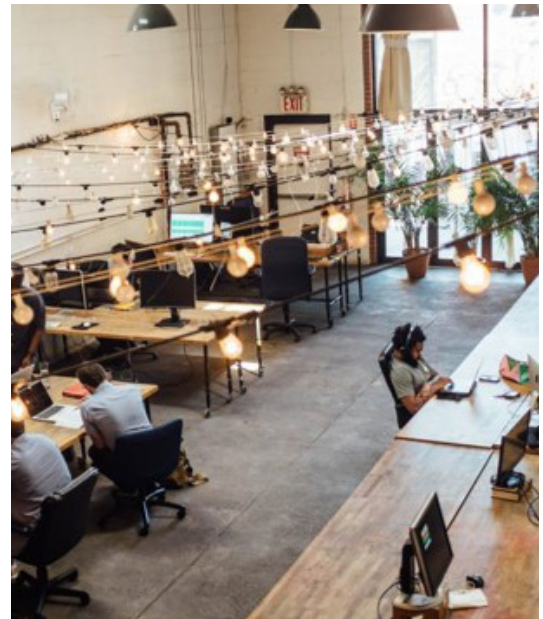


as well. The implementation of a wayfinding system is an opportunity to guide visitors to key destinations and parking locations in downtown. Wayfinding can enhance the local and regional branding while enhancing a visitor's experience finding things in downtown. The new Surry Arts Council Center and Siamese Twins Museum presents an opportunity to bring in new visitors as well. In addition, many of the existing venues in downtown present an opportunity to continue to expand and diversify offerings.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A number of opportunities exist to expand the downtown economy. The recently adopted sprinkler incentive program presents an opportunity to convert additional building space downtown into residential and other uses, increasing foot traffic during the evenings and weekends. Several retailers in downtown are operating on a hybrid business model with a brick and mortar storefront and the ability to ship products from online sales from the rear of the business. This is an opportunity and business model for others to consider downtown. Another opportunity is the creation of more co-working space such as the recently opened co-working space on Virginia Street. Co-working space is like development infrastructure (water and sewer), and it is an important element of a small business development strategy. Given the close proximity to Winston-Salem, an opportunity exists to attract remote workers, who may no longer have to commute to their office on a regular basis. During the listening sessions, we learned that this is already happening and the opportunity is to expand it.

▼ FIGURE 2.13 CO-WORKING SPACE EXAMPLE



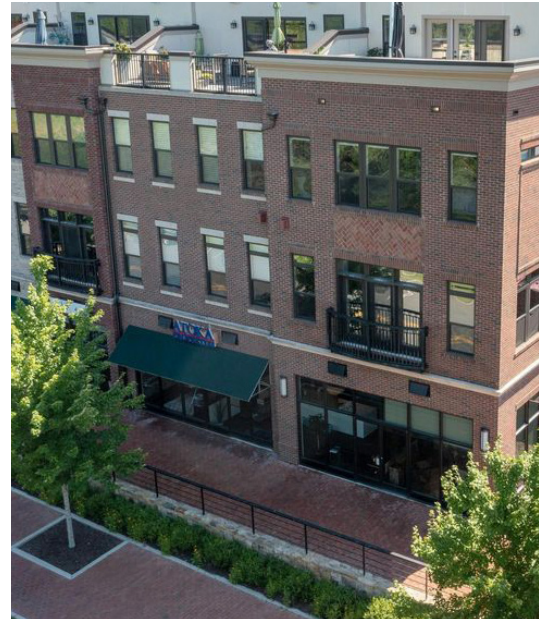
HOUSING

The listening session interviews provided insight into the demand for housing in downtown. The recent housing projects for sale in downtown have sold quickly. As a result, the market-rate rental units have extensive waiting lists with some people paying a deposit six months or more in advance to reserve their space. Upper story residential units above the typical first floor downtown storefront are somewhat limited, but there is opportunity for more. The condominium market is healthy and is likely to support new for sale developments. Another opportunity is in the new/modern single family housing and townhome products. These products do not currently exist in the immediate downtown area. As mentioned earlier, there is an opportunity to attract remote workers to move to Mount Airy from the Winston-Salem area.

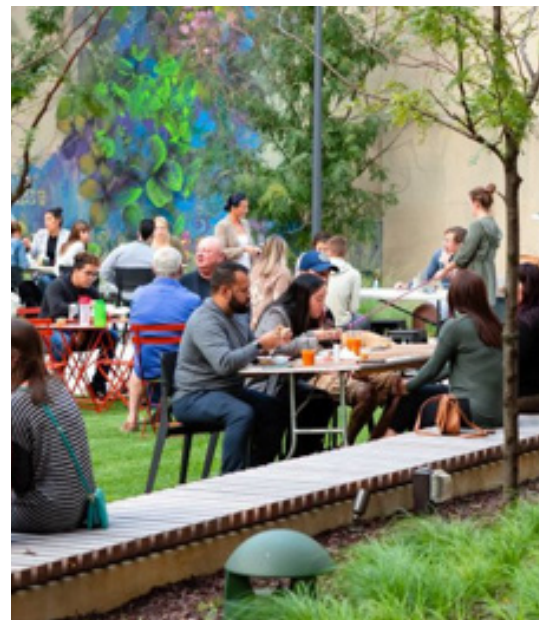
CITY LIFE

Downtown Mount Airy has a number of public spaces, events, festivals, and things to do downtown. In the survey, when asked about the future of downtown, people consistently responded that they wanted more to do, more restaurants, more entertainment, more variety in local shops, more outdoor dining, more of the things that people love to experience in a downtown community. As people continue to move into downtown, and as new visitors come to downtown, the opportunity exists to expand all of these things that make cities great place. For its size, Mount Airy has an abundance of existing venues that can help realize some of these needs in the future, playing an important role in attracting a younger population and people seeking an authentic downtown experience and lifestyle. Many opportunities also exist to expand downtown's public spaces to create more successful outcomes like the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District.

▼ FIGURE 2.14 DOWNTOWN HOUSING EXAMPLE



▼ FIGURE 2.15 ACTIVE PUBLIC SPACE



CHALLENGES

PARKING

Based on the general review of available parking space and the opinions expressed by survey respondents, parking in downtown Mount Airy is relatively easy most of the time. However, on Main Street, about 25% of the on-street spaces are taken up by vehicles that are parked there all day long. This is a challenge. Potential customers looking for a place to pull in quickly are often discouraged and move on, sometimes out of downtown altogether. While parking behind the primary Main Street businesses is abundant, the main Franklin Street lot is in need of repair, and these parking lots are often difficult for visitors to find. As described earlier, a wayfinding system can help with this issue. The steep topography between parking lots and Main Street, especially on the eastern edge of downtown, can be a deterrent for visitors to downtown. Those physically challenged may find it difficult to make their way up the hill to their destination. While the current parking demands generally seem to be met at this time, the addition of new developments and new uses will have an impact on parking. Related to this challenge is how the City will handle parking policy and requirements for new development, such as overnight lodging. How those rules and regulations are implemented over time will play a role in the overall supply and future use of upper stories in downtown.

TOURISM

While the Andy Griffith and Mayberry brands remain a significant draw for tourists to Mount Airy, the challenge is to continue diversifying visitor offerings. Additional efforts are needed to continue growing other sectors of the tourism economy such as the wine industry, outdoor activities, new events, and

▼ FIGURE 2.16 PARKING CHALLENGES ON MAIN



▼ FIGURE 2.17 BLUEGRASS AT THE EARLE THEATER



expansion of offerings at existing facilities. As the conference center plans continue to move forward, more overnight accommodations will most likely be needed in downtown in as close proximity as possible to the new conference facility.

CITY LIFE

The Market Street Arts and Entertainment District has been a success, however, additional opportunities are needed for outdoor dining and public spaces, especially on Main Street where it is extremely challenging to have well-designed outdoor seating. While the downtown offers evening entertainment and dining, the offerings need to be expanded with businesses staying open longer hours during the weekdays and the weekends. Adding street trees and more greenery will be a challenge, as will curating more events for young people in the 21 to 35 year old range.

MAIN STREET

While many residents and business owners would like to see a new and improved Main Street design, there are many challenges to be addressed in planning for those improvements. There are currently very limited areas where the sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate outdoor dining or street trees. The right-of-way is constrained by the existing buildings and options are limited for expansion of the sidewalk area. Although there are two travel lanes on Main Street, another challenge is delivery vehicles unloading on the street within one of those travel lanes, disrupting the flow of traffic. Other challenges include the scheduling and coordination of events to ensure local businesses can take advantage of additional sales opportunities. As we learned during interviews, moving the cruise-in events to Sundays has enabled

▼ FIGURE 2.18 EXAMPLE STREET LIFE



▼ FIGURE 2.19 TRUCK UNLOADING ON MAIN



the businesses that are regularly open on Saturdays to maintain a consistent flow of customers with the Main Street being open to traffic on more weekends. And, although it is not a significant challenge, the older technology behind the current signal light system does create some inefficiencies with moving traffic in and around downtown at key intersections.

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

Many of the downtown sidewalks that cross Main Street are very narrow, often just three to four feet wide. This hinders movement of visitors and residents in downtown. It also promotes an unsafe feeling when walking that close to traffic. It is also a challenge to more safely and efficiently connect to key destinations in and around downtown, including the Andy Griffith Museum on Rockford Street and the surrounding neighborhoods that have to cross major transportation corridors to walk into the downtown core. Some crosswalks are missing or need to be improved to make these connections safer. It is also a challenge to make a safe connection to the greenway system from downtown.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Although downtown is a desirable place to live and do business in Mount Airy, there are challenges to continued redevelopment. The infrastructure is aging. Although the capacity is adequate, the age of the lines means there will be significant upgrades in the future to support the continued development of downtown. Fire suppression costs are almost always a challenge for the redevelopment of upper stories. It is hoped that the recent sprinkler incentive program passed by the City will help owners move forward with future upper story conversions.

▼ FIGURE 2.20 ANDY GRIFFITH MUSEUM DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE



▼ FIGURE 2.201 INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES ON MOORE AVENUE



HOUSING

More residential and apartment development in downtown will help deliver 18-hour activity and create more retail and restaurant demand year-round. Developing new for-sale housing in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods is needed, however, available sites are limited.

▼ FIGURE 2.22 EXAMPLE TOWNHOME DEVELOPMENT



3



MASTER PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Master Plan establishes a road map or framework for the continued development and improvement of downtown over the next five to ten years. The recommendations in this section of the Plan are intended to provide guidance to the public and private sector as the city and private investors work together to move downtown forward. As the partnerships continue to be fostered, as was the case years ago with the establishment of the Municipal Service District, the future of downtown Mount Airy will remain strong.

The recommendations for the Master Plan focus on a new vision for Main Street, a vision for future public and private development sites, and a vision for improving connectivity in and around downtown. These recommendations and improvements, if implemented, will enhance the downtown experience for residents and visitors.

Following the Master Plan section is the Implementation Section. The implementation section recommends the priorities identified during the downtown workshops.

A NEW VISION FOR MAIN STREET

One of the primary recommendations of the Master Plan is the development of a new design for Main Street. Public input received during the process prioritized the desire for wider sidewalks for outdoor dining and entertainment, on-street parking, loading zones, street trees, new street lighting, the burial of above ground utilities, and a safer pedestrian environment.

Leading into the first downtown workshop, five Main Street redesign options were prepared based on the initial public input from the survey and interviews. At the workshops, meeting participants were given the opportunity to explore other ideas outside of the five preprepared options to develop a consensus within their group and report back to the larger group at the conclusion of the workshop. The five base options included:

- Two lanes | One-way | Flex space
- One lane | One-way | Flex space
- One lane | One-way | Angled parking on one side
- Two lanes | One-way | Parallel parking on one side
- One lane | One-way | Parallel parking on one side

At the conclusion of the first downtown workshop, all five of the smaller groups selected the two lanes, one-way, flex space concept for the new vision for Main Street.

FLEX SPACE DESIGN CONCEPT

At the public workshops, the meeting participants developed a consensus around the two-lane concept for Main Street, with traffic moving one-way, and a 20-foot wide flex space on each side of the street for outdoor dining and/or parking. The workshop participants wanted to see properly placed and maintained street trees, decorative lighting, and the designation of several loading zone areas to keep delivery trucks out of the middle of the road. The burial of above-ground utility lines was also a main idea discussed at the workshops.

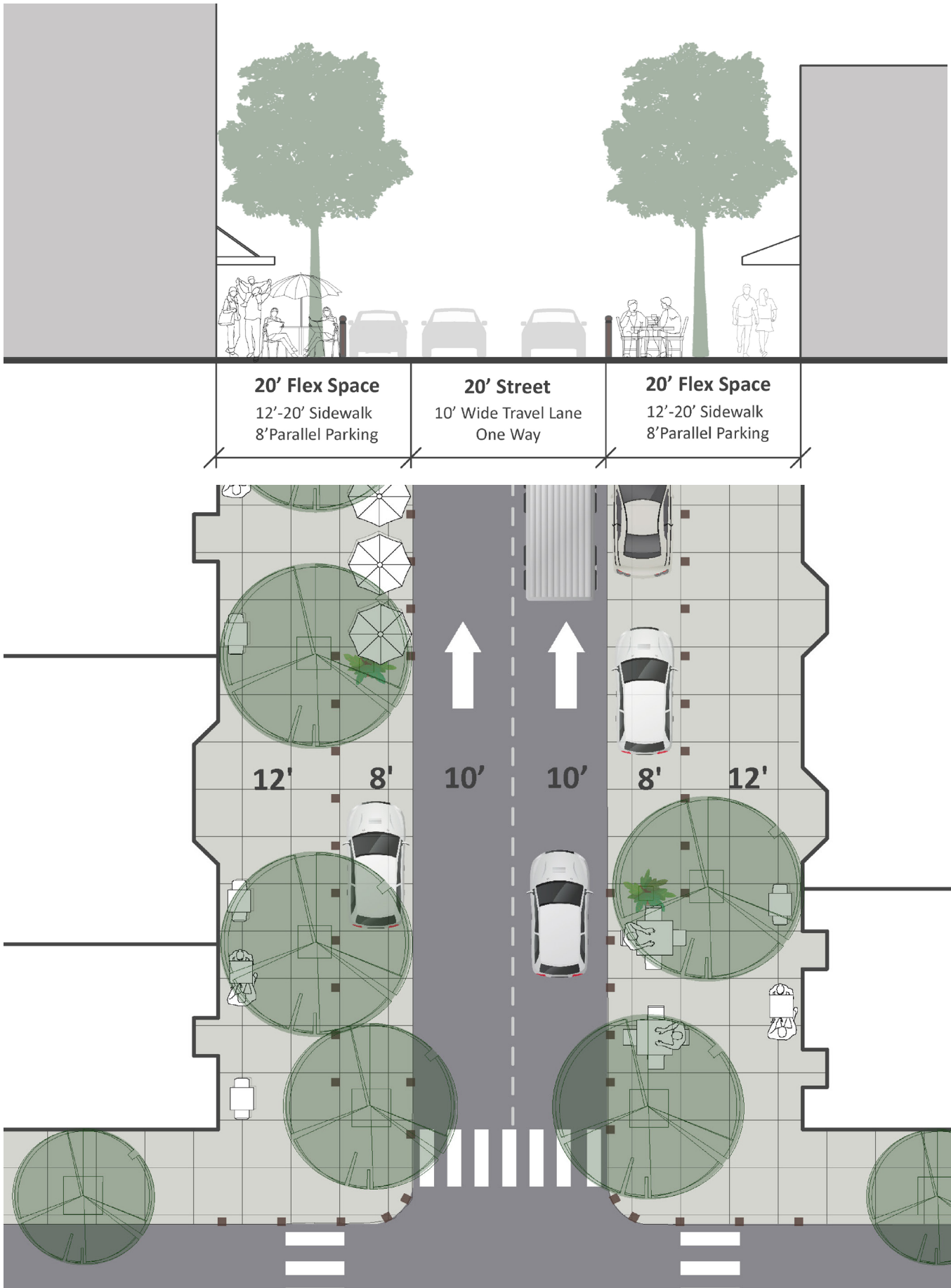
The flex space design was driven by the fire code, which requires a minimum 20' wide street. This requirement established the base framework for the two 10' wide travel lanes moving in a one-way direction on Main Street. On each side of the 20' wide street are 20' wide flex space areas from the edge of the pavement to the edge of each building. This area is envisioned as flex space with movable bollards that can be positioned to allow for a 12' wide sidewalk and 8' area for parallel parking or a 20' wide sidewalk. The movable bollards allow for parallel parking or outdoor dining (wider sidewalks) as determined from block to block and storefront to storefront.

This system does not require curb and gutter as the bollard system defines the space for cars and pedestrians. Examples of the curbless street design from across the country include Trade Street in Greer, South Carolina; Wall Street in Asheville, NC; Clematis Street in West Palm Beach; Market Square Street in the District of Columbia; Bell Street in Seattle; Winthrop Street in Cambridge; 4th Street in Huntingburg (Indiana); and many examples from New York City and Downtown Brooklyn.

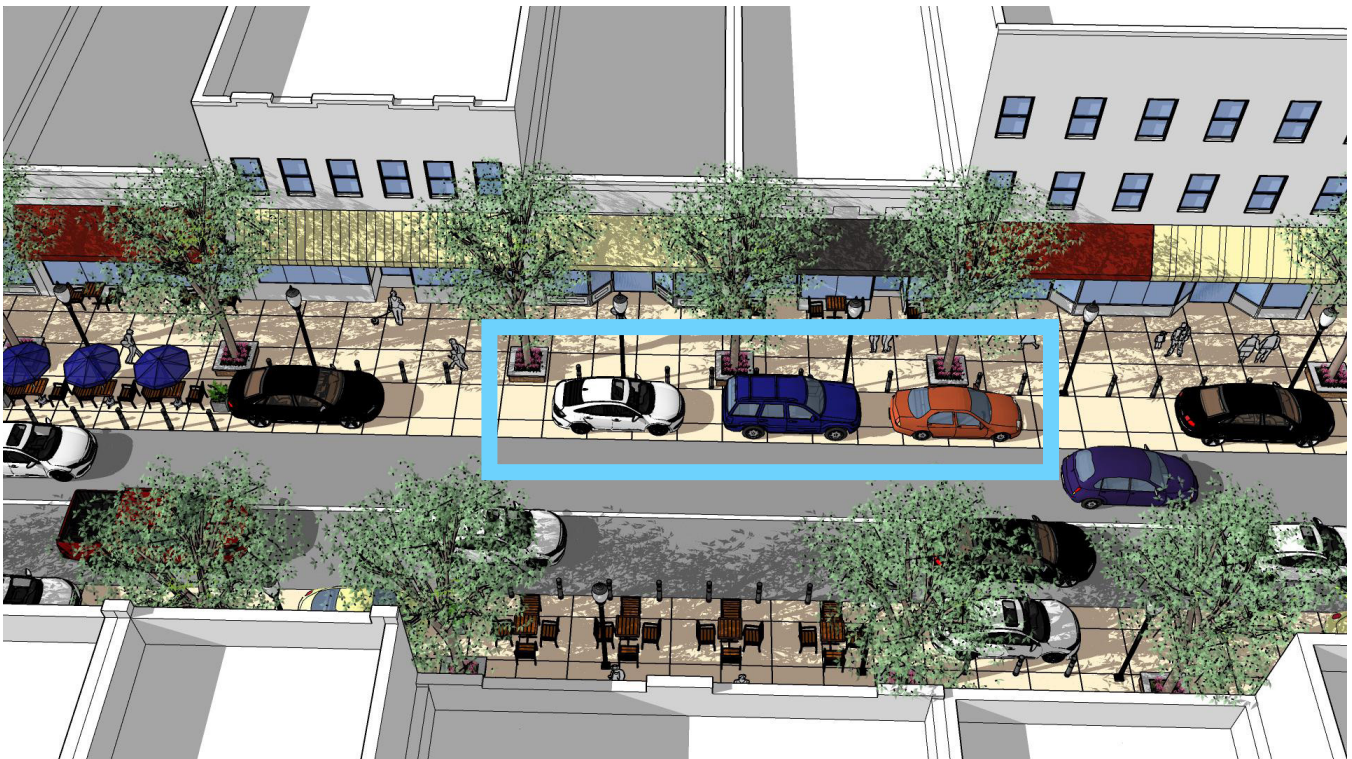
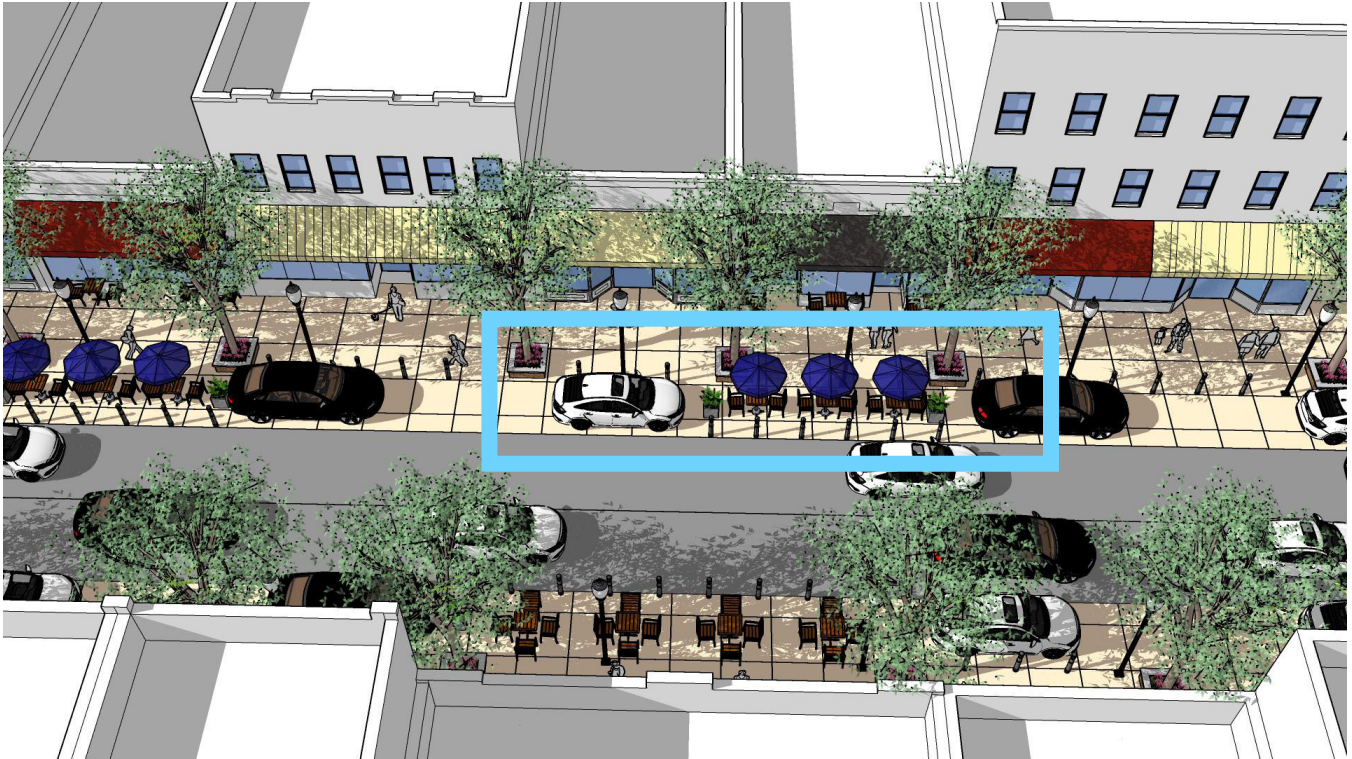
▼ FIGURE 3.1 CONCEPTUAL ILLUSTRATION OF THE MAIN STREET STREETScape VISION



▼ FIGURE 3.2 CROSS SECTION AND SITE VIEW OF CONCEPTUAL MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENTS



▼ FIGURE 3.3 THIS IS AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE MOVABLE BOLLARD SYSTEM. THE ILLUSTRATIONS BELOW DISPLAY HOW THE MOVABLE BOLLARD SYSTEM WORKS. THE IDENTIFIED AREA IN THE FIRST IMAGE DISPLAYS THE FLEX SPACE AS OUTDOOR DINING AREA WITH THE SECOND IMAGE SHOWING THE SAME FLEX SPACE AS PARALLEL PARKING.



▼ FIGURE 3.4 THE ILLUSTRATION PROVIDES A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE MAIN STREET STREETScape CONCEPT. THE ILLUSTRATION DISPLAYS THE TWO-LANE, ONE-WAY FLOW OF TRAFFIC WITH THE STRATEGIC PLACEMENT OF PARKING AND CAFES. THE STREETScape INCLUDES WIDER SIDEWALKS IN THE FLEX SPACE AREAS, STREET TREES, AND UNDERGROUND UTILITIES.



▼ FIGURE 3.5 RECENT CURBLESS STREETScape ON TRADE STREET IN GREER, SOUTH CAROLINA



OPPORTUNITY SITES

An outgrowth of the downtown assessment was the identification of potential opportunity sites within downtown that appear to have the market potential and site characteristics for major development or redevelopment. The focus of the opportunity sites is the redevelopment of the Conference Center and Spencer's Mill. The City has received a grant from the State to help the project moving forward. The other five sites are not expected to be developed at one time. It is anticipated that demand exists today to develop one of these sites. The Plan contemplates how all of the sites can be developed over the next five to ten years.

The public-owned and private-owned sites are shown in the figure to the right. The sites include the following:

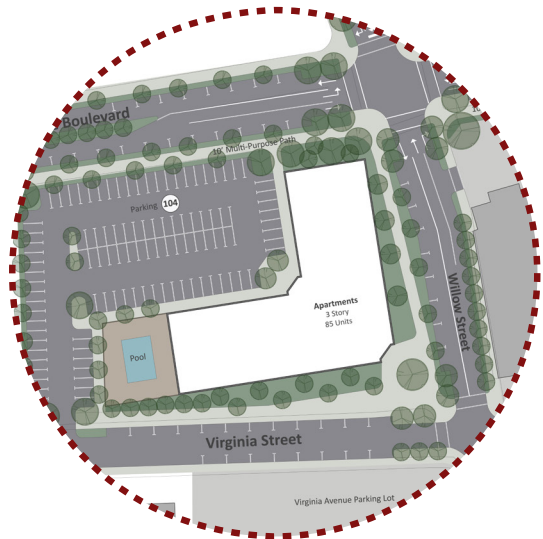
1. Conference Center / Spencer's Mill
2. Housing/Other Opportunity at Virginia/Willow Street
3. Housing/Other Opportunity at the Mount Airy News Site
4. City-owned Site along Cherry Street
5. Municipal Complex along Rockford Street
6. Franklin Street Area



01 Conference Center / Spencer's Mill

- Private-owned Sites
- Public-owned Sites

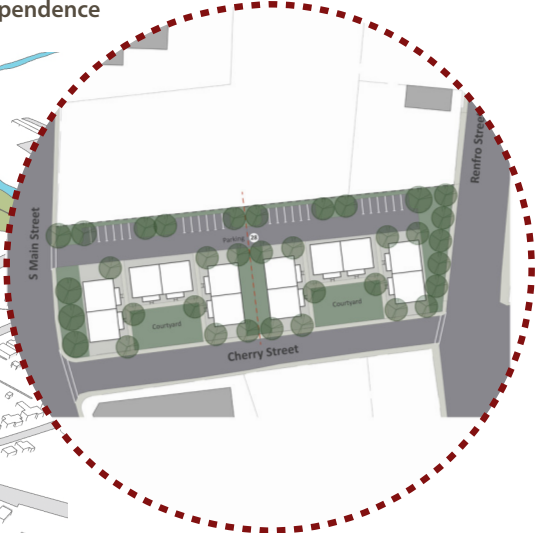
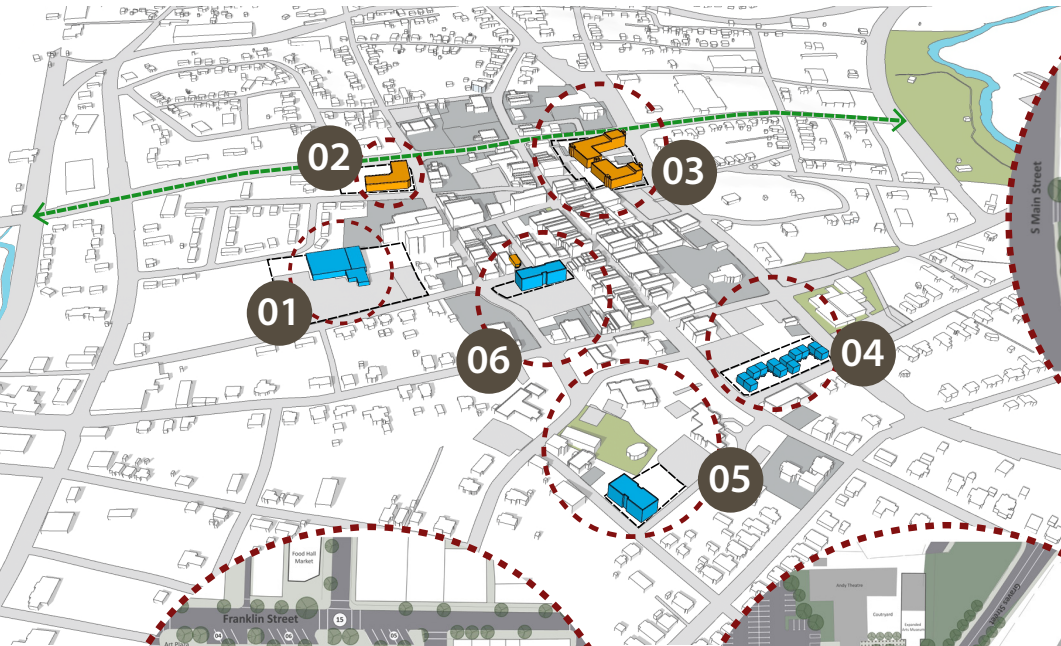
▼ FIGURE 3.6 LOCATION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OPPORTUNITY SITES IN DOWNTOWN



02 Vacant Lot at Virginia Street and Willow Street



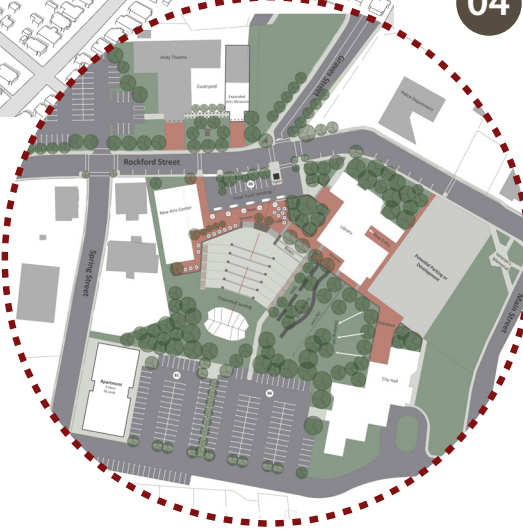
03 Current Newspaper Site at Renfro and Independence



04 Vacant Lot at Main Street and Cherry Street

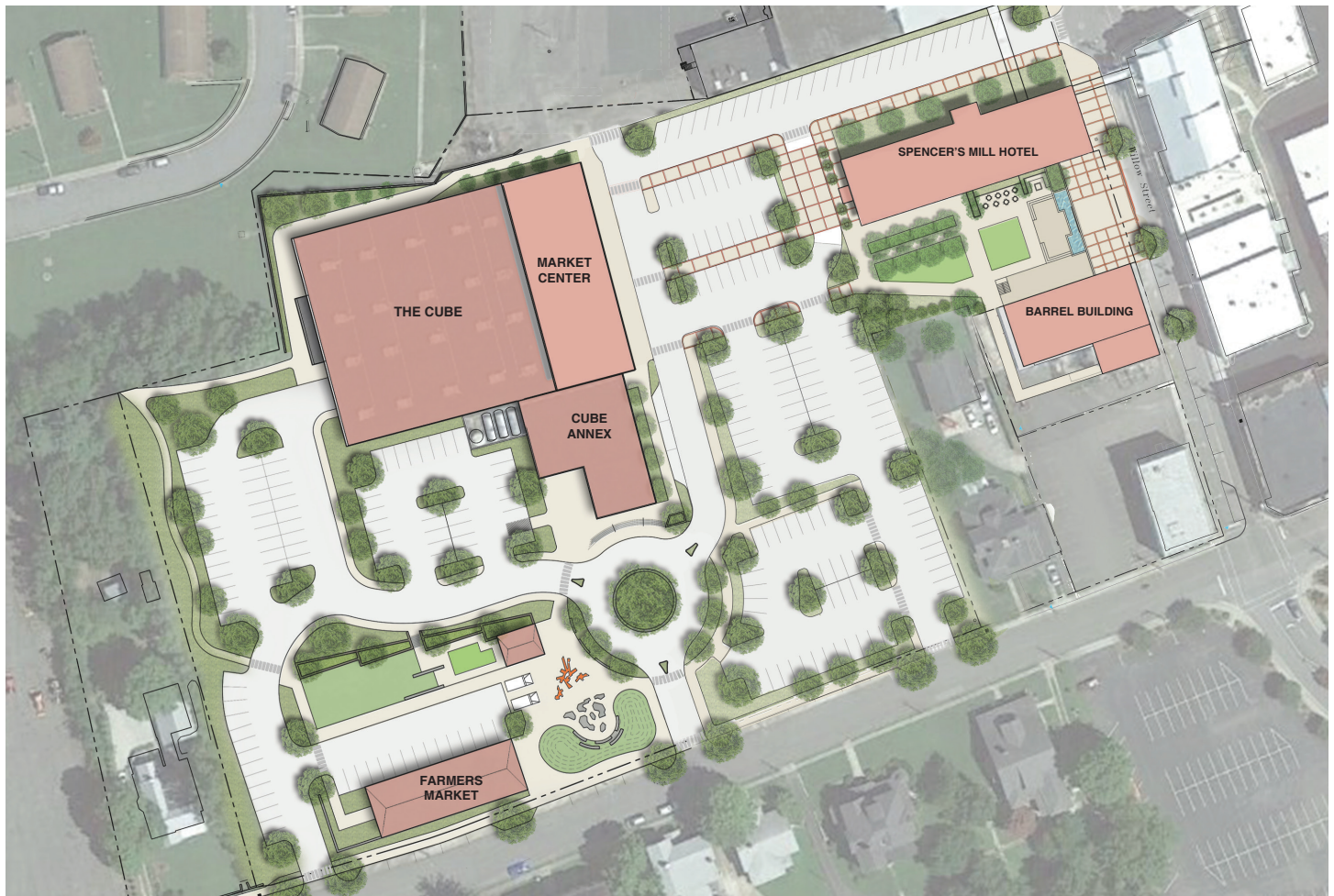


06 Franklin Street Area



05 Municipal Complex at Rockford Street

▼ FIGURE 3.7 OPPORTUNITY SITE 01 - CONFERENCE CENTER / SPENCER'S MILL SITE



OPPORTUNITY SITE 01

Over the last decade, the City has studied many possibilities for the reuse of the former Spencer's Mill site. One of the most promising options is the conversion of the mill property into a multi-purpose conference center supported by a planned 70-room hotel redevelopment along Willow Street in the Sparger Building. While the primary development of the conference center is still in the planning and funding stage, a development deal is moving forward to complete the hotel. The conference center project recently received a \$2 million planning and site work grant from the State to help keep it moving forward.

The conference center will be designed to host small to mid-sized events up to 500 people total, creating a new generator of visitors and foot traffic for downtown. The site will also include a farmers market, an active play area for children, and an outdoor gathering space. The parking will be dedicated to the conference center during events, however, it can potentially provide overflow parking for downtown visitors when the facility is not in full swing. The nearby Barrel Building is also being redeveloped and will be able to host a variety of smaller scale events including weddings, reunions, and similar-sized events.

It was reported that calls have been fielded from a variety of public agencies with inquiries about the proposed conference center and hotel. Once plans and funding are established, it is very likely that another hotel will be needed in as close proximity as possible to the conference center.

▼ FIGURE 3.8 OPPORTUNITY SITE 02 AT WILLOW STREET AND VIRGINIA STREET



OPPORTUNITY SITE 02

This 1.9 acre opportunity site is located at the corner of Virginia Street and Willow Street and is owned by one private owner. The site is currently paved, however, it is not supporting parking for any surrounding uses and is vacant. The site is mostly flat and presents the opportunity for a relatively easy redevelopment investment. The site is adjacent to several residential areas and is an excellent site for a housing opportunity for apartments and potentially a hotel site to support the conference center lodging needs and accommodations for other overnight visitors. This conceptual rendering displays a three story residential building that could potentially include up to 85 residential units.

▼ FIGURE 3.9 OPPORTUNITY SITE 02



▼ FIGURE 3.10 OPPORTUNITY SITE 03 - MOUNT AIRY NEWS



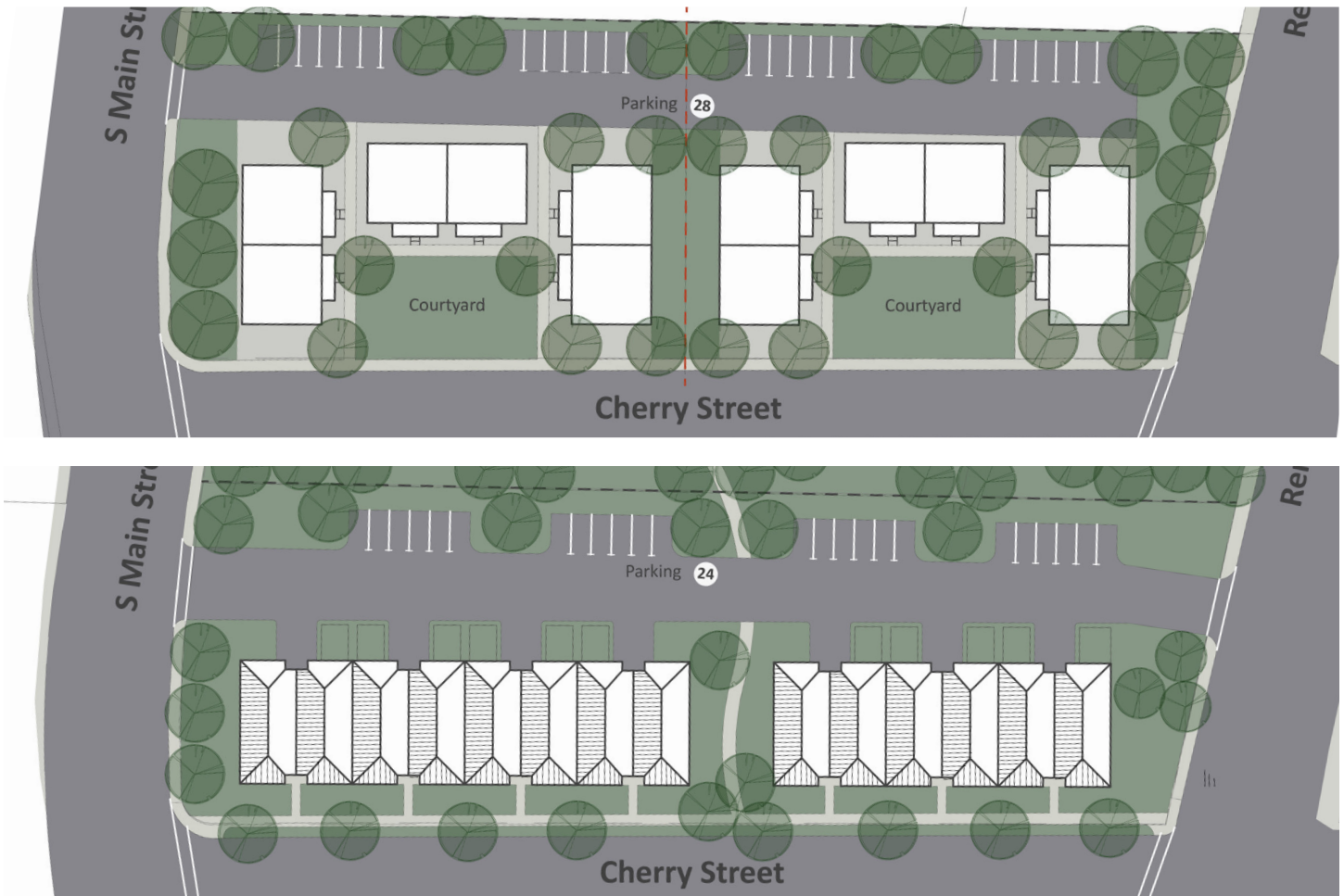
OPPORTUNITY SITE 03

The Mount Airy News site is one of the largest opportunity sites in downtown at approximately 2.9 acres in size. There are currently two private owners that are open to redevelopment. The size of the site makes it possible for this project to be developed in phases and could potentially include underground parking given the dramatic change in topography. Nearby public-owned lots could potentially be leveraged to provide additional night-time parking. As displayed in the rendering to the left, this conceptual building could be three to four stories in height and contain approximately 170 housing units. In addition, during the planning and construction phase, an attempt could be made to realign City Hall Street and create an additional downtown parking opportunity.

▼ FIGURE 3.11 MOUNT AIRY NEWS



▼ FIGURE 3.12 OPPORTUNITY SITE 04 ON CHERRY STREET - COURTYARD COTTAGE AND TOWNHOME EXAMPLES



OPPORTUNITY SITE 04

This opportunity site is owned by the City and is approximately 1.5 acres along Cherry Street, providing a direct connection between South Main Street and Renfro Street. This property presents an opportunity for “For Sale” units - townhouses or cottage court houses to help fill the demand for a new housing product in downtown. In these conceptual illustrations, approximately 12 courtyard cottages could be developed, each fronting a shared courtyard, while about 14 townhouses could be constructed. The design of the homes should be carefully planned to ensure it maintains the overall character of the downtown.

▼ FIGURE 3.13 CITY-OWNED PROPERTY ON CHERRY STREET



▼ FIGURE 3.14 OPPORTUNITY SITE 04 - GOVERNMENT CAMPUS



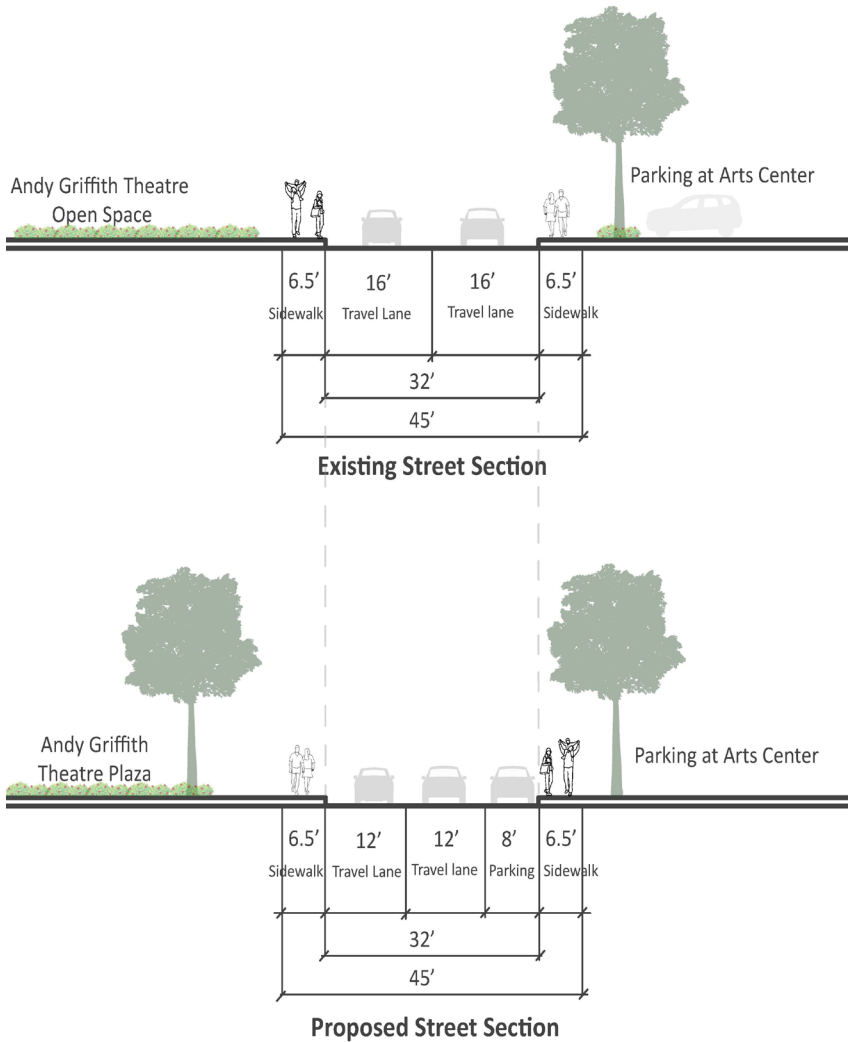
OPPORTUNITY SITE 05

During the public workshops, this overall conceptual plan for the municipal complex area was perceived as being too ambitious at this time given all of the construction projects and changes happening around this site with the Arts Center and the recently completed parking area between the Library and Municipal Building. Residents attending the meeting wanted to keep the idea in the Plan for long-term consideration, but wanted to focus more on the needed improvements at the Rockford Street and Graves Street intersection, desiring to see how the improvements that are underway come together.

The primary objective of the overall concept is to unite all of the City's cultural facilities into one campus, creating a place for residents and visitors to see the campus as the home of Mount Airy's cultural events. The concept considers the extension of the municipal building parking for events and supporting a potential housing opportunity along Spring Street. The realignment of Graves Street

with Rockford Street creates a safer pedestrian crossing area. It is somewhat dangerous in its current configuration. Other Rockford Street improvements include adding on-street parking, which provides additional spaces for events and also helps to calm traffic.

▼ FIGURE 3.15 PROPOSED STREET SECTION FOR ROCKFORD STREET



▼ FIGURE 3.16 ROCKFORD STREET FOCUS AREA



▼ FIGURE 3.17 TRAFFIC AT ROCKFORD STREET



Another feature of this plan includes the creation of a continuous terrace level shown in the brick color that would link together the new Arts Center, Library, Amphitheater, and Municipal Building with an expanded parking lot adjacent to the Veteran's Memorial. This terrace area creates a continuous space for food and vending areas during concerts and events to help maximize revenues from the programming at the amphitheater. Food trucks could park in the upper lot, with cafe tables on the terrace along with vending tents.

▼ FIGURE 3.18 TERRACE CONCEPT



In this concept, the main amphitheater seating area includes a small expansion on both wings to create more seating and generate more revenue. The concept could provide for “box seats” by the library side to create additional space for corporate sponsors to provide a value revenue source.

At the intersection of Rockford Street and Graves Street, a tower can be constructed to provide a focal point for the campus. It can also help provide a “brand” for the campus, while serving as a wayfinding marker to help visitors find the campus and other key points downtown. The tower could also include changeable signage to announce upcoming events.

Within the campus, a gravity-inspired play area for kids can be developed along the library and municipal building side that takes advantage of the topography. The plan envisions the installation of large custom slides or zip lines, and a sledding hill for when it snows. Trees should be added along the streets and edges to create shaded areas during the warmer months of the year. The intention is to make it feel like a small college campus.

In the northwestern corner of this concept, additional parking could be created to provide for overflow parking during events, which will help replace any lost spaces that may have been used for events in other areas of the campus. These parking areas could potentially be additional sources of revenue during major events.

▼ FIGURE 3.19 SLIDE CONCEPT



▼ FIGURE 3.20 PARKING EXPANSION CONCEPT



▼ FIGURE 3.21 HOUSING OPPORTUNITY ON THE GOVERNMENT CAMPUS



The final feature within this larger campus plan is the potential for a housing opportunity in the southwestern corner on approximately 1.1 acres of city-owned land. The site is relatively flat and can potentially be developed as a three to four story residential building with 52 housing units. The parking area behind the Municipal Building can be shared in the evenings as the hours of demand for the parking will be opposite of the municipal building.

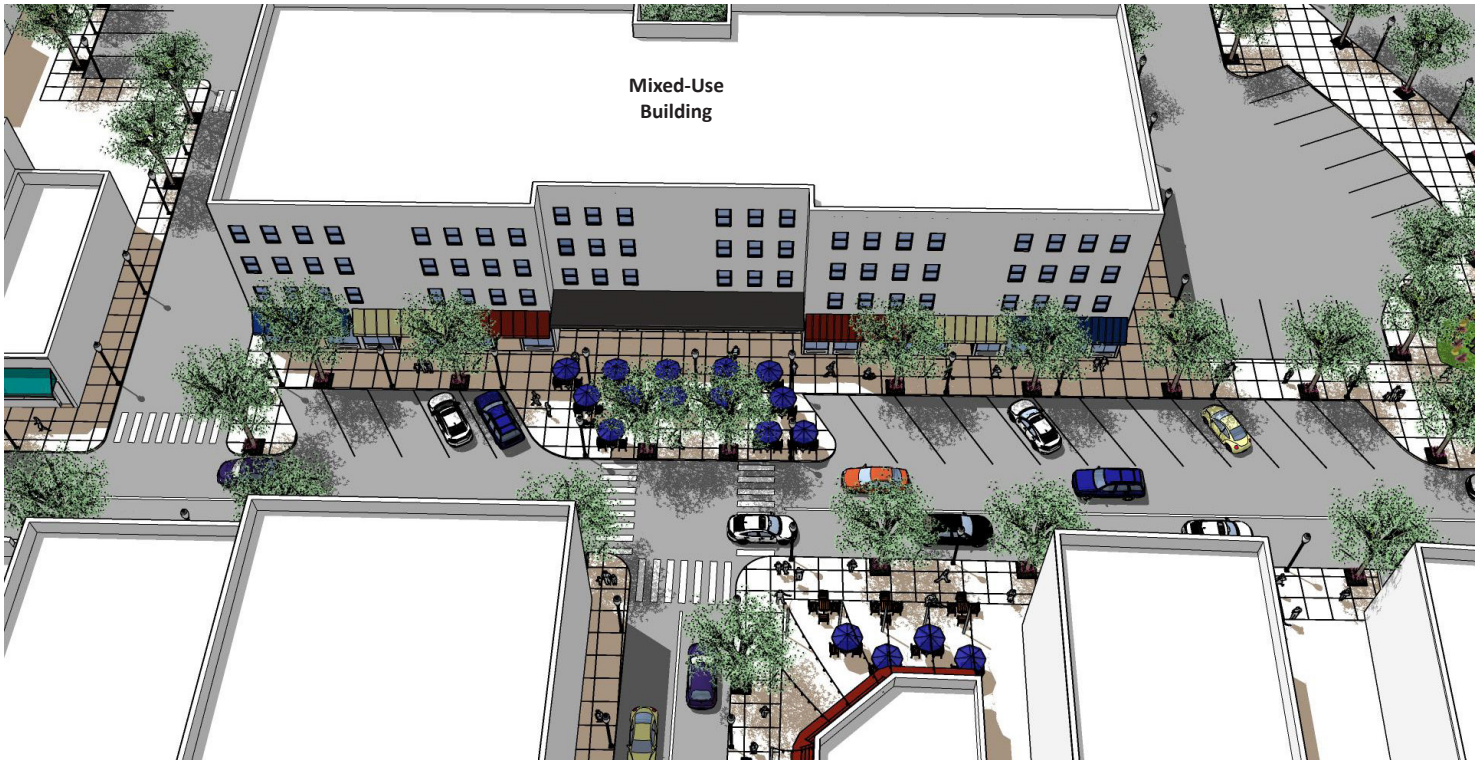
▼ FIGURE 3.22 OPPORTUNITY SITE 05 - FRANKLIN STREET AREA



OPPORTUNITY SITE 06

The recommendations for the Franklin Street area go beyond the opportunity site identified in the Franklin Street lot. The Master Plan envisions a series of improvements and new development that will transform the entire corridor by leveraging the new conference center development, the energy from the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District, and the well-established business environment on Main Street. The primary opportunity site is along the northern edge of the Franklin Street lot across from Market Street's terminus at Franklin Street. In the illustration above, the concept includes a three to four story mixed-use building with about 12,000 square feet of ground floor restaurant or retail space, and approximately 60 residential units or 75 hotel rooms located in the

▼ FIGURE 3.23 ILLUSTRATION OF FRANKLIN STREET IMPROVEMENTS AND MIXED-USE BUILDING



▼ FIGURE 3.24 VIEW AT CORNER OF WILLOW & FRANKLIN



▼ FIGURE 3.25 VIEW FACING WEST TOWARD MARKET STREET



upper floors of the building. The Franklin Street lot is conceptually redesigned to accommodate more spaces and loading zones to support the redevelopment of public and private property. Finally, there is enough parking in this concept to support residential and overnight lodging as the daily business users of the parking lot have opposite hours of the potential residential users of the lot.

Improvements to Franklin Street include sidewalk widths of 10' to 14' connecting Main Street to the conference center with larger sidewalk areas for outdoor dining, cafes, and public art. An opportunity also exists for the private sector to develop the lot that is owned by the Masonic Lodge and currently utilized for parking. For example, a food hall or other food and beverage use could be built on this site with an outdoor dining area to compliment other uses in this area. And finally, the building located across Market Street from this location could potentially have the upper stories developed into an overnight lodging opportunity to support the new conference center and visitors as well. All of these changes, taken together, could transform the entire Franklin Street area.

▼ FIGURE 3.26 OPPORTUNITY SITE 05 - ACTIVE PLAY AREA AND OPEN SPACE CONCEPT



As the city considers alternatives for the redevelopment of the Franklin Street area, one alternative for the Franklin Street opportunity site is the development of a public greenspace that can serve the downtown area long-term or provide a holding pattern until the demand may arise for a mixed-use building on the site. The greenspace can include an active play area and passive open space areas with shade structures. This area will compliment the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District, expanding the footprint to allow for crowd overflow on the weekends when the District is busy.

▼ FIGURE 3.27 OPPORTUNITY SITE 05 - PARKING FOCUSED CONCEPT



A final alternative for the Franklin Street lot is its sole use as a parking lot. The redesign can maintain the conceptual configuration for the park or mixed use building, until such time the city may decide to move forward with the greater redevelopment of the Franklin Street area. As a final note, these conceptual parking improvements incorporate public-owned and private-owned land to increase the total number of parking spaces and improve the flow of traffic in the area. Agreements will need to be established with private property owners to realize the full potential illustrated in this parking lot concept.

CREATING COMPLETE STREETS

One of the primary themes of the plan focused on improving pedestrian connectivity in and around downtown. As discovered during the assessment, many of the major corridors surrounding downtown are operating well under capacity as they were designed to handle much heavier volumes of traffic and truck traffic when the mills were in full operation. Today, Independence Boulevard and Renfro Street present opportunities to improve safety for pedestrians, transforming these corridors into complete streets. This complete street concept for Mount Airy envisions reducing the number of travel lanes, providing opportunity for all modes of travel, improving pedestrian and vehicular safety, and enhancing the appearance of the street. At key intersections in the complete street concept, conflict points are reduced from 8 to 4 and mid-block turning conflict points are reduced from 6 to 3. This cuts the potential opportunities for accidents in half. An example of a complete street conversion is displayed below. Pedestrian and bicycle visibility is increased, drivers are more cautious, and on-street parking helps provide a barrier for pedestrians using the sidewalks.

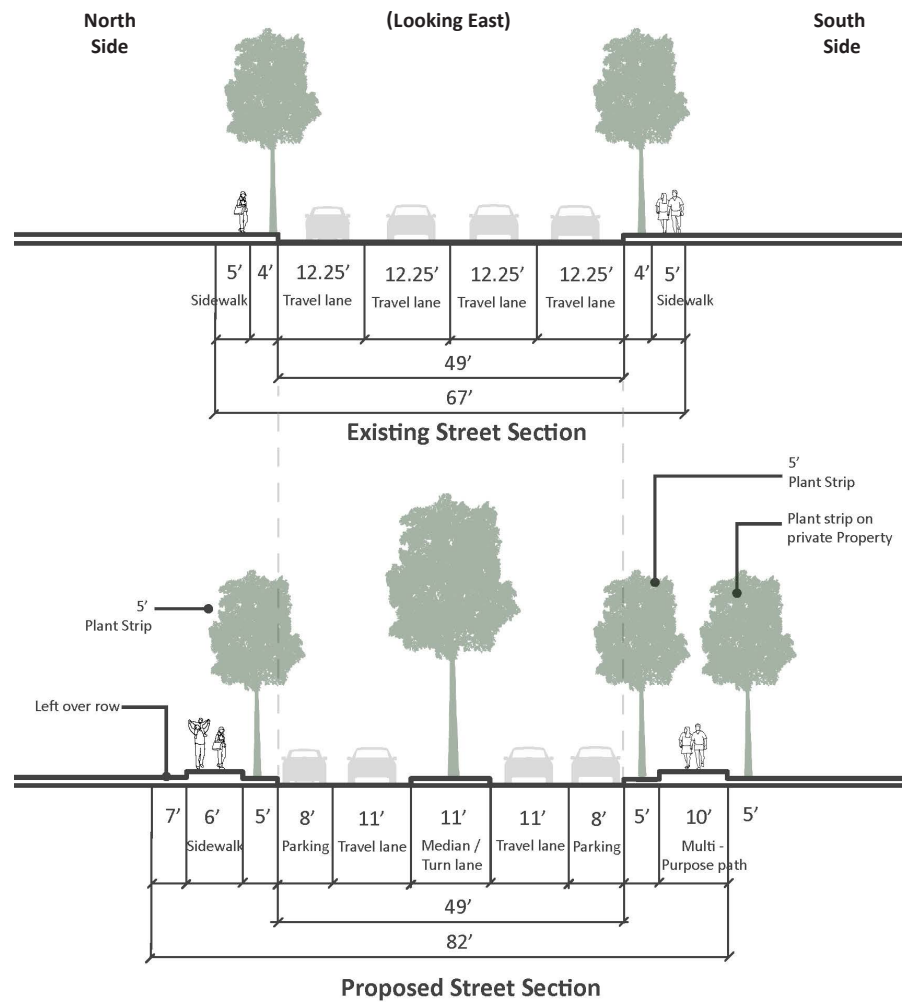
▼ FIGURE 3.28 EAST BOULEVARD (CHARLOTTE) COMPLETE STREET CONVERSION FROM 2006 TO 2012



INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD

In the complete street concept for Independence Boulevard, the street right-of-way is redesigned to include a median separating two 11' travel lanes with parallel parking on edges to the curb. On the north side of Independence, a five foot planting strip separates pedestrians from the roadway. On the south side of Independence, the concept envisions a greenway / multi-use path serving as connection between the city's two major greenways. The greenway connector is separated by a five foot planting strip as well. The planting of trees along Independence will help transform the overall appearance of the corridor and provide shade to users of the facilities.

▼ FIGURE 3.29 COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT FOR INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD



▼ FIGURE 3.30 POTENTIAL GREENWAY CONNECTOR ALONG INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD



▼ FIGURE 3.31 VIEW OF THE COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT AT THE CORNER OF WILLOW STREET AND INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD



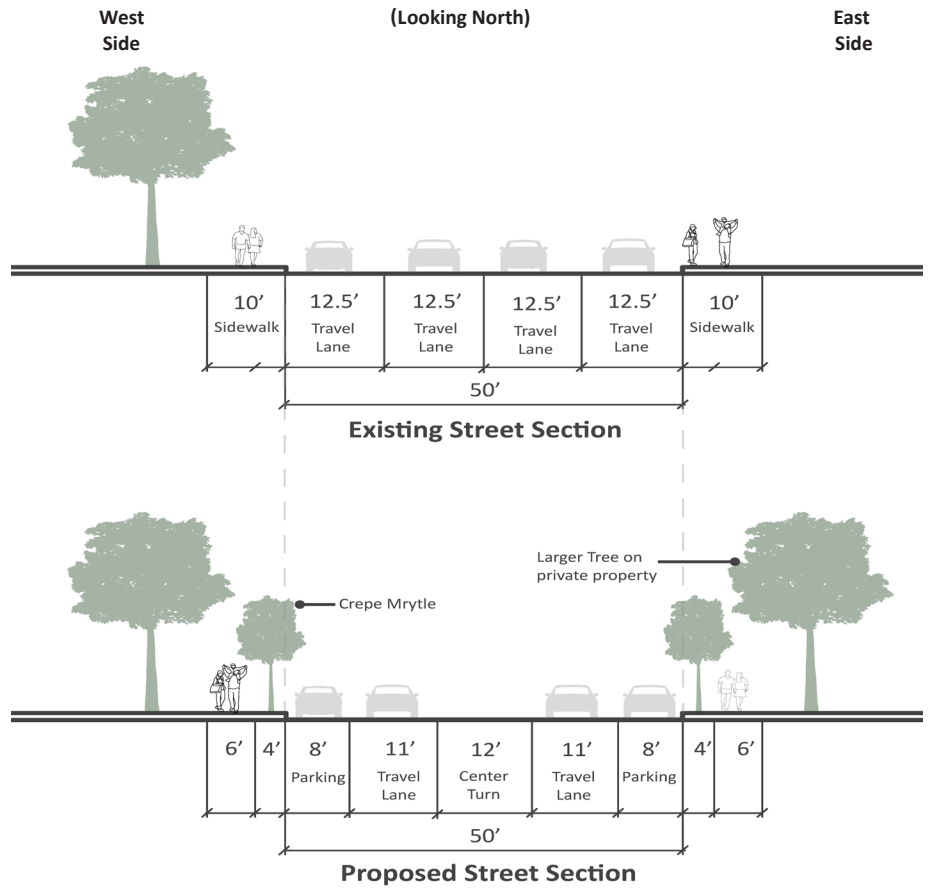
▼ FIGURE 3.32 VIEW OF THE COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT ON INDEPENDENCE BOULEVARD



RENFRO STREET

Similar to the complete street concept for Independence Boulevard, the Renfro Street complete street concept envisions a center turn lane in the middle of two 11' travel lanes. Along the curb edge, parallel parking has been added to both sides of the street to provide overflow parking for businesses, the community center, and special events. This concept includes a more narrow 4' wide planting strip and shade trees to provide for a more pleasant walking experience. The image below demonstrates how a sidewalk can be lined with street trees to provide shade.

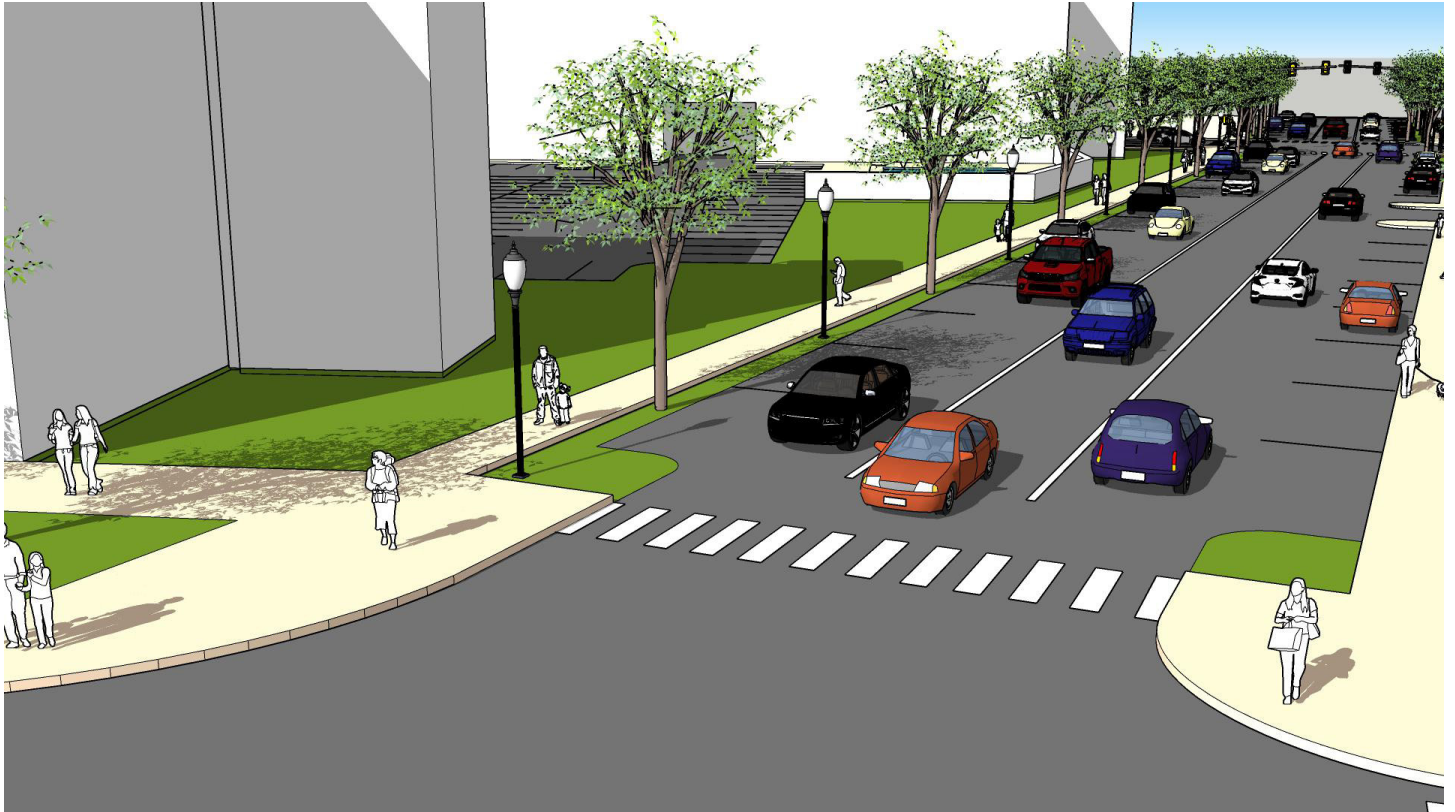
▼ FIGURE 3.33 COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT FOR RENFRO STREET



▼ FIGURE 3.34 EXAMPLE GREENWAY / MULTI-USE PATHWAY (CHARLOTTE)



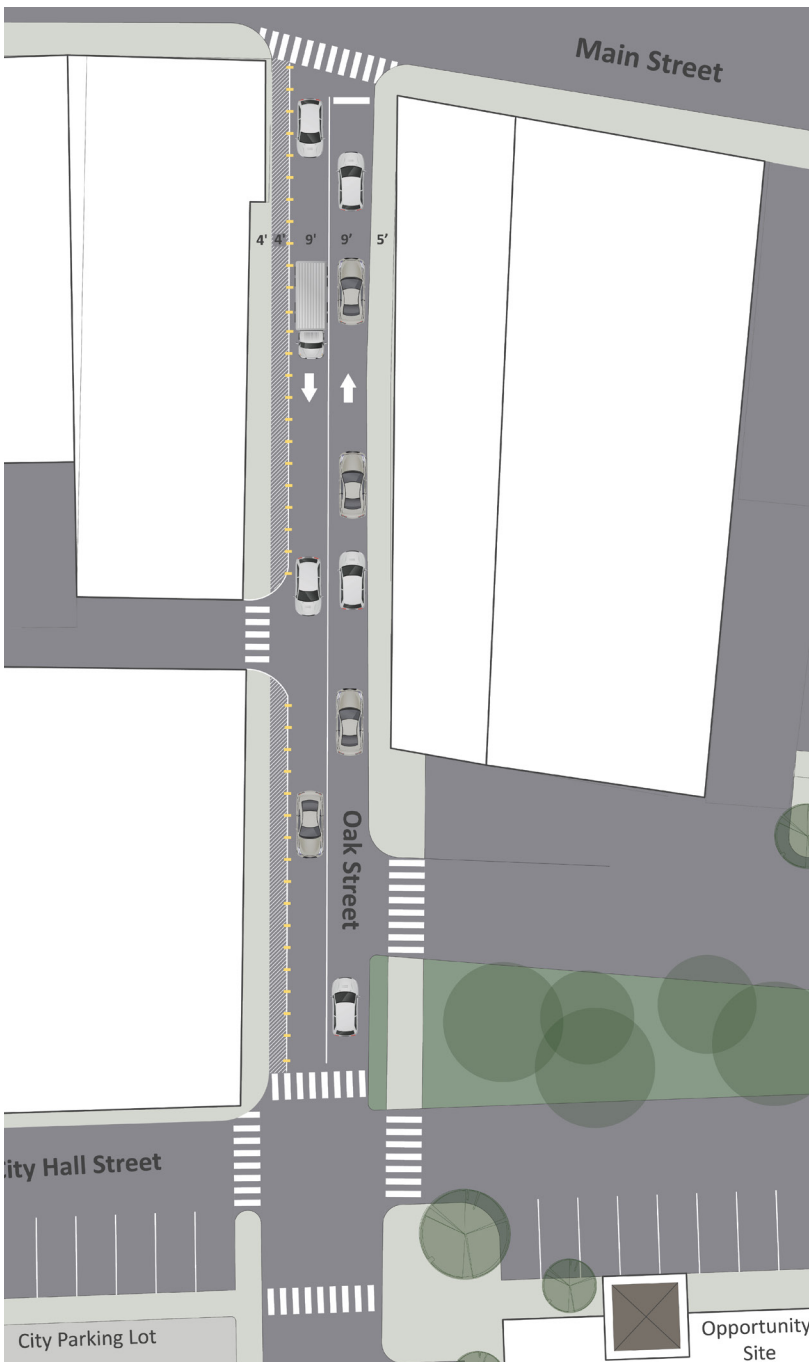
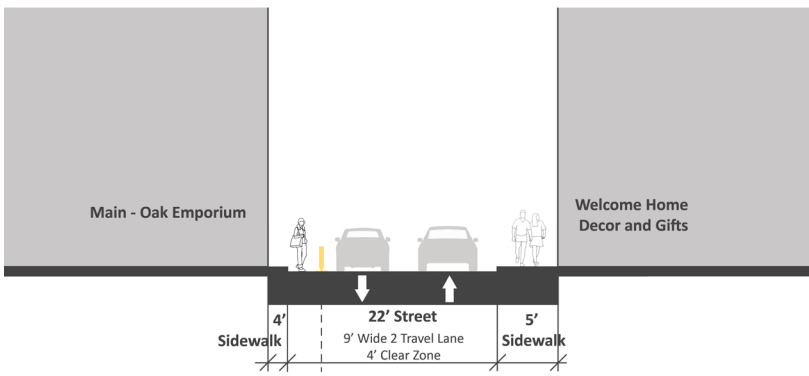
▼ FIGURE 3.35 VIEW OF THE COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT ALONG RENFRO STREET AT MOUNT AIRY NEWS REDEVELOPMENT



▼ FIGURE 3.36 VIEW OF THE COMPLETE STREET CONCEPT AT THE INTERSECTION OF RENFRO STREET AND INDEPENDENCE



▼ FIGURE 3.37 OAK STREET CONCEPTUAL DESIGN



OAK STREET CONCEPT

Through a combination of drive-over bollards and the re-striping of Oak Street, a safer pedestrian experience can be achieved. On the southern side of the street the drive-over bollards allow for pedestrians to walk more safely on the street within a 4' wide clear zone down to City Hall Street and the Moore Avenue parking lot. This concept allows for a five foot wide sidewalk on the northern side and two 9' wide travel lanes. The drive-over bollards ensure that fire apparatus can easily maneuver as needed during an emergency response.

A second option is converting the segment of Oak Street from Main Street to City Hall Street into a one-way direction (heading east) and turning back into two-way from City Hall Street to Renfro Street. This option will also provide for wider and safer sidewalks.

▼ FIGURE 3.38 OAK STREET SIDEWALK



WAYFINDING

In 2013, the North Carolina Department of Transportation approved a wayfinding system design template for the entire Yadkin Valley Region. Although the sign design template or guidelines are approved, the actual wayfinding signs for each individual community have not been specifically planned. The City of Mount Airy will need to conduct a city-specific planning process to determine the key destinations and sign locations for directing visitors to Mount Airy. An example of the Yadkin Valley wayfinding system design template is illustrated below to demonstrate the types of destinations that may be placed on signs specific to Mount Airy. For wayfinding signs located along roads maintained by the City, an alternative sign template may be designed to incorporate the color scheme and design pictured below in Figure 3.40 - Recently Installed Downtown Directory Sign.

▼ FIGURE 3.39 YADKIN VALLEY WAYFINDING DESIGN TEMPLATE



▼ FIGURE 3.40 RECENTLY INSTALLED DOWNTOWN DIRECTORY SIGN



PARKING

As described in the downtown assessment, the current supply of parking appears to be meeting the current demand in downtown. While a parking space may not be open directly in front of any given business at a particular time of day, visitors are able to easily find a space by driving to the next block or going straight to a public parking lot. However, it was noted that approximately 15 to 20 vehicles are parking on Main Street all day long in the prime on-street spaces for downtown. This is a problem that needs to be addressed in the short term. One step to address the problem is to identify the owners of the vehicles and discuss the situation, explaining the overall benefit to all property and business owners in the downtown of having those spaces available for customers. Another approach is to begin with time-limited parking and enforcement of those time limits. This will help ensure there is turn-over, opening up those spaces that are currently occupied all day long. More intense approaches can be employed over time, such as paid parking, if the situation cannot be resolved using one of these initial methods.

In regard to new development and redevelopment proposals, the City should evaluate its land use development and parking standards for downtown to ensure best practices are being followed for the growth and development of downtown.

In the long-term, it is recommended that a detailed parking study be completed within the next 3 to 5 years as new development and redevelopment continues to occur. This time frame will allow the city to assess the impact of the conference center and other redevelopment projects that are underway or being planned. Also, if the city moves forward with many of the complete street recommendations, the study can determine how the availability of new on-street parking resulting from those projects is impacting the overall supply and demand of parking in downtown.

▼ FIGURE 3.41 MOORE AVENUE PUBLIC PARKING LOT



4



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

OVERVIEW

On the final night of the downtown workshops, a summary of the main ideas was presented for review by the participants. At the conclusion of the meeting, community members in attendance were asked to prioritize the Master Plan concepts that were developed and discussed during the first two workshops. While the participants considered all of the Plan's recommendations and initiatives to be important, they prioritized the following concepts for implementation over the next five to ten years:

- Fund and build the conference center
- Redevelop the Franklin Street area
- Implement a flexible streetscape for Main Street
- Develop a wayfinding system plan
- Create complete streets
- Encourage development on opportunity sites

FUND AND BUILD THE CONFERENCE CENTER

The City has invested a significant amount of resources into the redevelopment of the former Spencer's Mill site. With detailed studies and plans in place for the conference center initiative, the City should continue to move forward with the development of funding strategies to implement the project. The State of North Carolina recently allocated \$2 million toward the project and the City needs to keep that momentum going. As the Sparger Building is redeveloped as a hotel and the Barrel Building continues to be redeveloped for smaller events, the City should make every effort to ensure the overall plan for the conference center development is implemented. The completion of this project will help further diversify the tourism economy and draw in out of town spending for meetings and events.

REDEVELOP THE FRANKLIN STREET AREA

One of the best opportunities for redevelopment in connection with the conference center is the Franklin Street area. While the vision is to redevelop the entire Franklin Street corridor, the first course of action should be to improve the pedestrian link from the conference center site into downtown. The redesign of Franklin Street for pedestrians will allow for wider sidewalks, public art, and street trees to help draw conference attendees up to the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District and Main Street for shopping, dining, and entertainment.

The Franklin Street parking lot also needs to be improved concurrent with the street improvements to allow for an overflow area for larger conferences or when a conference is in town during an event. The parking lot should be configured in a manner to allow for the construction of the potential mixed-use development or the public space described in the Master Plan section. Any needed utility upgrades should be completed during the construction of these improvements.

IMPLEMENT A FLEXIBLE STREETScape FOR MAIN STREET

A new streetscape design for Main Street should promote flexibility and a balance between the needs of pedestrians, parking, and businesses. The movable bollard system envisioned in the Master Plan helps fulfill that objective by creating a flex space on each side of the street that can accommodate the needs of Main Street over time. The movable bollards can be positioned within the flex space to demarcate areas for parallel parking and areas for cafes and outdoor dining/seating without having to worry about reconstructing a curb line or moving the street. This concept allows Main Street to grow and change without the constraints of a standard curb and gutter system.

The new streetscape will create wider sidewalks, areas for planting street trees, enhanced pedestrian crossings, new street lighting, and clutter-free views of the historic buildings with the burial of above-ground utilities, while maintaining the one-way direction of traffic flow.

The next step is to complete an engineering design study and plans to convert the conceptual vision into a formal plan of action. The Master Plan concept for Main Street considered a basic concrete grid system for the sidewalks to help define the flex space from the street, provide for placement of the movable bollards, and for the simplicity of the required maintenance for the long-term. However, the design can easily be adapted to include brick banding or even granite materials into the design similar to other sidewalks in downtown. In the conceptual illustrations, the brick and granite are incorporated as materials for the tree planting areas, carrying forward that connection with the materials used to construct the Whittling Wall and gazebo.

DEVELOP A WAYFINDING SYSTEM PLAN

Using the NCDOT-approved sign templates and system for the Yadkin Valley Region, the City should form a wayfinding committee to identify the key destinations in downtown that visitors should be directed to, such as the Mount Airy Museum of Regional History, the Municipal Building, public parking, and other key destinations. Once those destinations are identified, the wayfinding committee will identify the locations for the wayfinding sign placement and identify the destinations to be placed on each sign. The plan for the sign placement and

destinations must be approved by NCDOT. After receiving approval from NCDOT, the signs can be manufactured and installed at the approved locations per NCDOT guidelines.

CREATE COMPLETE STREETS

As identified in the Master Plan section, many of the streets surrounding the downtown core and within the downtown core need pedestrian safety improvements. The recommended transformation of Independence Boulevard and Renfro Street into complete streets presents the opportunity to better manage traffic as well. Finally, another major improvement is the greenway connector along Independence Boulevard that can be completed in connection with the redesign of Independence Boulevard.

Since Independence Boulevard and Renfro Street are state maintained roads, it is important to begin the planning process with NCDOT as soon as possible to ensure the City's vision for each roadway is communicated and included in NCDOT's long-range transportation plans.

ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT ON OPPORTUNITY SITES

During the workshops, participants liked the idea of encouraging the development of the private sites located at Virginia Street/Willow Street and the Mount Airy News site. The conceptual plans can be shared with the owners to gauge their interest and determine if there are any opportunities for public private partnerships, especially in the creation of shared parking facilities and connectivity to the proposed greenway connector along the sites' shared boundary with Independence Boulevard.

NEXT STEPS

Once the Master Plan is adopted, the Core City Team should work with the Mount Airy Downtown staff to develop an internal strategy to assign individual staff members the responsibility of overseeing each of the implementation priorities. The group should meet on a monthly basis during the first year to ensure progress is being made toward implementation. This group should also be responsible for reviewing the Plan with elected officials and volunteer boards on a regular basis to monitor changes that may be needed over time.

An implementation matrix is provided on the following pages as a guide for the next five years and beyond. The Core City Team and Mount Airy Downtown staff can utilize the matrix for developing work plans and budgets for each fiscal year. The matrix should be kept up to date, removing items that are no longer relevant and adding new action items as necessary.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

STRATEGY	FY 2022-2023	FY 2023-2024
<p>FUND & BUILD THE CONFERENCE CENTER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize the State funded grant to complete site work, engineering, grading, infrastructure upgrades, and stabilization for Phase 3 - Visitor Center and Conference Center. Continue to facilitate the completion of Phase 2 - Hotel and Market Center. Continue to work with public and private partners to secure funding and commitments for completing Phase 2 and Phase 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with public and private partners to secure funding and commitments for completing Phase 2 and Phase 3. Continue to facilitate the completion of Phase 2 - Hotel and Market Center. Finalize construction plans for the completion of Phase 3. Develop a marketing plan to communicate with the public on the construction projects impacting downtown, continuing to identify strategies to keep the public engaged such as live camera feeds for people to monitor construction progress.
<p>REDEVELOP THE FRANKLIN STREET AREA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for the Franklin Street streetscape. Prepare preliminary engineering plans and cost estimates for the Franklin Street parking lot improvements. Work closely with private property owners immediately adjacent to the public-owned parking on potential agreements to expand the number of spaces and enhance the traffic flow. Work with public and private partners to secure funding for the improvements. Begin to develop a vision for the integration of public art along Franklin Street. Work with private property owners to generate interest and identify development opportunities for Franklin Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare detailed plans and budget resources necessary to complete the Franklin Street streetscape design. Prepare detailed plans and budget resources necessary to complete the Franklin Street parking lot improvements. Continue to work with private property owners to generate interest and identify development opportunities for Franklin Street. Finalize plans for integrating public art into the Franklin Street area. Develop a marketing plan to communicate with the public on the future construction projects for Franklin Street in coordination with other construction projects impacting downtown.

FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin construction of Phase 3 - Visitor Center and Conference Center. • Continue to facilitate the completion of Phase 2 - Hotel and Market Center. • Begin marketing plans concurrent with the construction of Phase 3. • Develop a strategic plan to consider the long-term operations, maintenance and other matters related to the Visitor Center and Conference Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate the completion of Phase 2 and the opening of the Hotel and Market Center. • Continue construction on Phase 3. • Finalize marketing plans and securing events for the opening of the new Visitor and Conference Center in 2026 - 2027. • Review strategic plan for the facility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate the opening of the Visitor and Conference Center. • Implement marketing plans for attracting new events and visitors to the area. • Update the facility's strategic plan and begin establish a capital improvement plan for operations and maintenance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to update the strategic plan for the facilities to ensure the operations and maintenance are keeping up with user needs for the facilities. • Continue to develop and update marketing plans and programming to ensure the maximum use of the new facility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin construction of the Franklin Street streetscape project. • Begin construction of the Franklin Street parking lot improvements. • Implement plans for public art along Franklin as the construction is nearing completion • Continue to encourage and facilitate redevelopment of private development opportunities along Franklin Street. • Consider increasing facade grants during the construction period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate the reopening of Franklin Street and the Franklin Street parking lot. • Celebrate any new development or building facade improvements. • Evaluate ways to expand programming along Franklin Street in connection to the Market Street Arts and Entertainment District. • Continue to implement plans for public art on Franklin Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to encourage and facilitate redevelopment of private development opportunities along Franklin Street. • Continue programming and planning for Franklin Street to encourage visitors for conferences and events to find their way to Main Street. • Update and maintain public art installations along Franklin Street. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to encourage and facilitate redevelopment of private development opportunities along Franklin Street. • Evaluate the success of attracting visitors into the Main Street area from the Visitor and Conference Center.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	FY 2022-2023	FY 2023-2024
<p>IMPLEMENT A FLEXIBLE STREETScape FOR MAIN STREET</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a survey, preliminary engineering plan, and cost estimates for the Main Street improvements. • Identify any physical or other constraints that may impact how the flex space concept can be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate workshops with property owners to discuss details of the design options from the preliminary engineering plans to solicit feedback block by block. • Develop policies for how the flex space concept will be implemented and where the initial parking areas and spaces for outdoor dining should be located. • Identify areas for loading along Main Street.
<p>DEVELOP A WAYFINDING SYSTEM PLAN</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a wayfinding committee. • Determine key destinations within the City to be included (i.e. Downtown, Earle Theater, Museum of Regional History - specific business names are not allowed). • Identify streets and locations maintained by NCDOT and maintained by the City to determine the signs and locations that will need NCDOT approval. • Signs on NCDOT roads will need to comply with the approved Yadkin Valley template. • Signs on City maintained roads may have an alternative sign design. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a budget and funding plan with public and private partners for the phased fabrication and installation of the wayfinding signs.
<p>CREATE COMPLETE STREETS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin discussions with NCDOT officials to identify Renfro Street and Independence Boulevard for complete street improvements in the long-range plan. • Incorporate the complete street plans into the Pedestrian Master Plan. • Begin plans to make the greenway connection along Independence Boulevard and incorporate the route into the Pedestrian Master Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify public and private partners needed to create the greenway connection. • Begin preliminary planning phase for the greenway project. • Ensure the complete streets concept for Renfro Street and Independence Boulevard are officially incorporated into NCDOT's long-range plan for Mount Airy.

FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize construction plans and cost estimates for the new streetscape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget for streetscape improvements. Develop a marketing plan to communicate with the public and business owners on the Main Street construction phases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin the phased construction of the Main Street streetscape improvements. Implement marketing plan and maintain strong communications with the public and business owners on a regular basis. Consider increasing facade grants during the construction period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the Main Street streetscape project. Implement marketing plan and celebration plans for the new Main Street.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fabricate and install the first phase of wayfinding signs. Celebrate the installation of the signs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to fabricate and install wayfinding signs in accordance with the funding plan/strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to fabricate and install wayfinding signs in accordance with the funding plan/strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a maintenance plan for the wayfinding signs to ensure a positive visitor experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to develop a preliminary engineering plan for constructing the greenway connection, identifying any additional right-of-way that may be needed. Identify portions of the complete street concepts that can be implemented with the greenway connection. Examine low cost improvements such as pavement striping to begin implementing the complete streets concept. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure public and private funding for constructing the greenway connection and complete street improvements at intersections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to construct the greenway connection and complete street intersection improvements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Celebrate the opening of the greenway connection. With partners, prepare a maintenance plan for the greenway connector. Coordinate with NCDOT on the implementation of the full complete street plan for Independence Boulevard and Renfro Street.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX (CONTINUED)

STRATEGY	FY 2022-2023	FY 2023-2024
<p style="text-align: center;">ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT ON OPPORTUNITY SITES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with private property owners to generate interest in the development of the identified opportunity sites. • Identify any needs and constraints related to the development of the opportunity sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with private property owners to help encourage the development of the opportunity sites. • Ensure City policies and codes align with potential development on the opportunity sites. • Evaluate the potential of new opportunity sites not considered in the Master Plan.
<p style="text-align: center;">CORE CITY TEAM AND MOUNT AIRY DOWNTOWN STAFF OVERSIGHT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold an organizational meeting. • Assign individual staff to oversee each strategy. • Develop internal work plans to implement the assigned priorities. • Identify the public and private partners and resources to implement each strategy. • Coordinate implementation time line for each strategy and refine the implementation matrix as determined. • In year one, meet on a monthly basis. • Maintain partnership with the North Carolina Main Street Program and Main Street America. • Provide an end of year report on implementation to elected officials, volunteer boards, community partners, and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet on a regular basis to evaluate the implementation of the Master Plan. • Develop internal work plans to implement the assigned priorities. • Work to ensure funding is established for action items. • Provide updates to elected officials, volunteer boards, community partners, and others. • Update the implementation matrix. • Maintain partnership with the North Carolina Main Street Program and Main Street America.

FY 2024-2025	FY 2025-2026	FY 2026-2027	FY 2027+
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine development potential of the identified City-owned opportunity sites. • Continue to encourage development of private opportunity sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider receiving proposals for development of City-owned sites. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the list of opportunity sites within downtown. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies and ideas for new opportunity sites.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet on a regular basis to evaluate the implementation of the Master Plan. • Develop internal work plans to implement the assigned priorities. • Work to ensure funding is established for action items. Provide updates to elected officials, volunteer boards, community partners, and others. • Update the implementation matrix. • Maintain partnership with the North Carolina Main Street Program and Main Street America. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet on a regular basis to evaluate the implementation of the Master Plan. • Develop internal work plans to implement the assigned priorities. • Work to ensure funding is established for action items. • Provide updates to elected officials, volunteer boards, community partners, and others. • Update the implementation matrix. • Maintain partnership with the North Carolina Main Street Program and Main Street America. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet on a regular basis to evaluate the implementation of the Master Plan. • Develop internal work plans to implement the assigned priorities. • Work to ensure funding is established for action items. • Provide updates to elected officials, volunteer boards, community partners, and others. • Update the implementation matrix. • Maintain partnership with the North Carolina Main Street Program and Main Street America. • Update the Downtown Master Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin implementation of the updated Downtown Master Plan. • Continue the Core City Team and Mount Airy Downtown Staff oversight of the Downtown Master Plan implementation.

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