



# Renaissance Plan

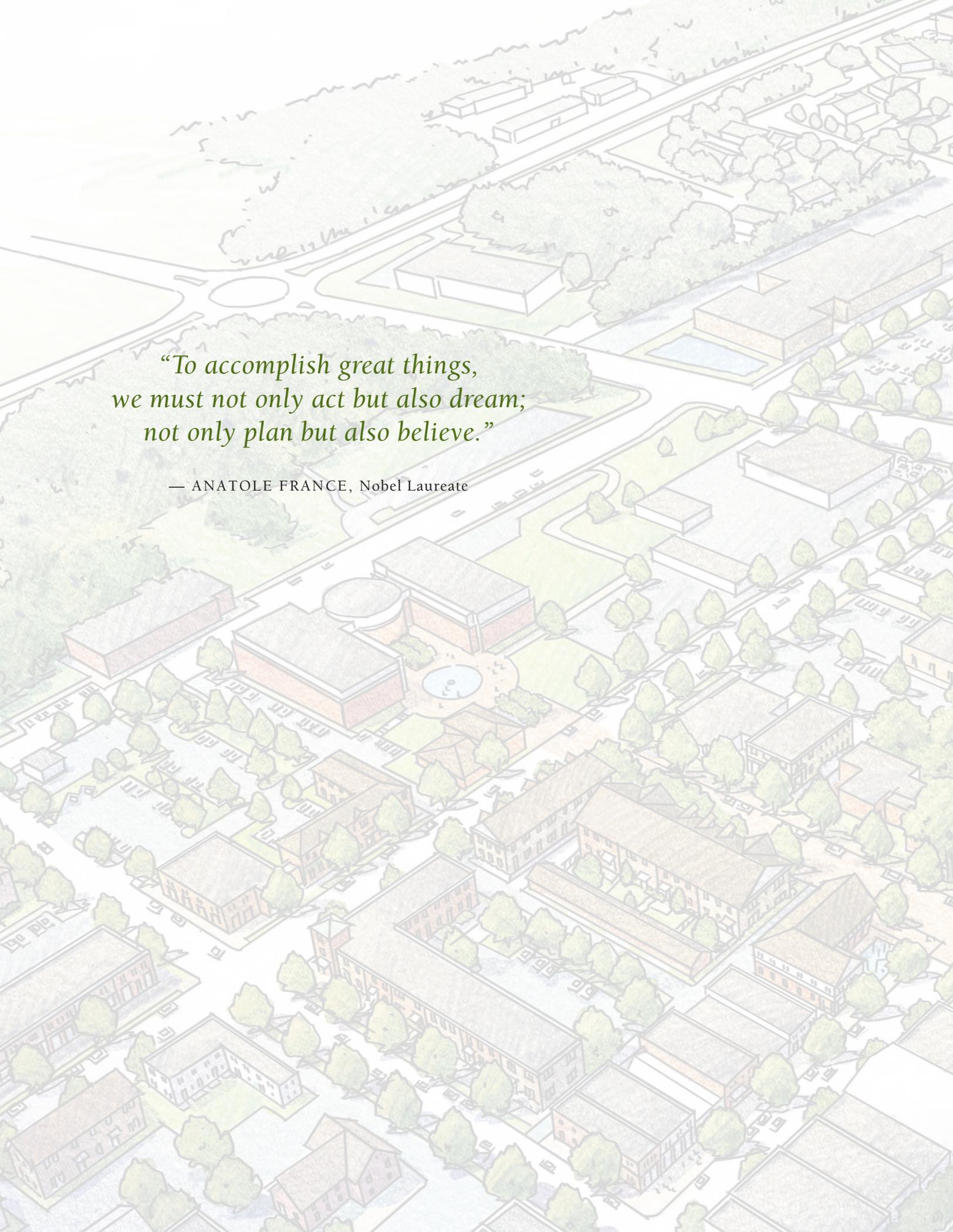
for Downtown Wake Forest, NC

SEPTEMBER 2017



TOWN of  
WAKE FOREST



An aerial, isometric illustration of a university campus. The scene is filled with various buildings of different sizes and colors (mostly browns and greys), interspersed with numerous green trees. A winding river or stream flows through the upper left portion of the image. The overall style is that of a hand-drawn architectural rendering with soft shading and fine lines.

*“To accomplish great things,  
we must not only act but also dream;  
not only plan but also believe.”*

— ANATOLE FRANCE, Nobel Laureate

# Renaissance Plan

## *for* Downtown Wake Forest, NC

*Prepared for the Town of Wake Forest*

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TOWN of  
WAKE FOREST





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*White Street mixed-use building and retail shops with Binkley Chapel in the distance*

# 1

## Executive Summary



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Connect the core*

*Manage the cars*

*Create a destination*

*Put people first*

*10 projects to complete in 5 years*

# 1 Executive Summary



## 1.1 Summary Introduction

The Renaissance Plan Update builds on the original study conducted in 2004. Over a decade ago, a plan was developed to provide policy and programmatic recommendations for the revitalization of the historic downtown. Additionally, it proposed a number of realistic development opportunities for the heart of the Wake Forest community with the goal of creating a more vibrant community for all who visit, work, and live in Wake Forest. Some goals and strategies were completed and some are still a work in progress. The Great Recession in the mid – late 2000s also drastically impacted the way we think, live, plan and spend. Several key public and private investments have occurred since 2004, and we are seeing a renewed interest and vibrancy in downtown Wake Forest.

### Time for an Update

While continually striving for a vibrant and economically successful downtown that benefits the municipality, property owners, merchants, and potential investors, this plan update does the following:

- » It produces a market study identifying development potential
- » It develops retail strategies
- » It provides opportunities for new housing
- » It designs streetscape improvements
- » It develops mobility strategies that prioritize bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit
- » It provides parking strategies including management, on-street parking, and location of off-street parking areas
- » It identifies and tabulates private development & redevelopment opportunities
- » It forms strategies for attracting new retail, restaurant, office and housing to the area
- » It implements key urban design principles that promote quality of life
- » It develops short-term and long-term implementation strategies



**RESOURCE:** Check out the first Renaissance Plan completed in 2004 ([wakeforestnc.gov](http://wakeforestnc.gov))



## 1.2 Key Goals

### Connect the Core

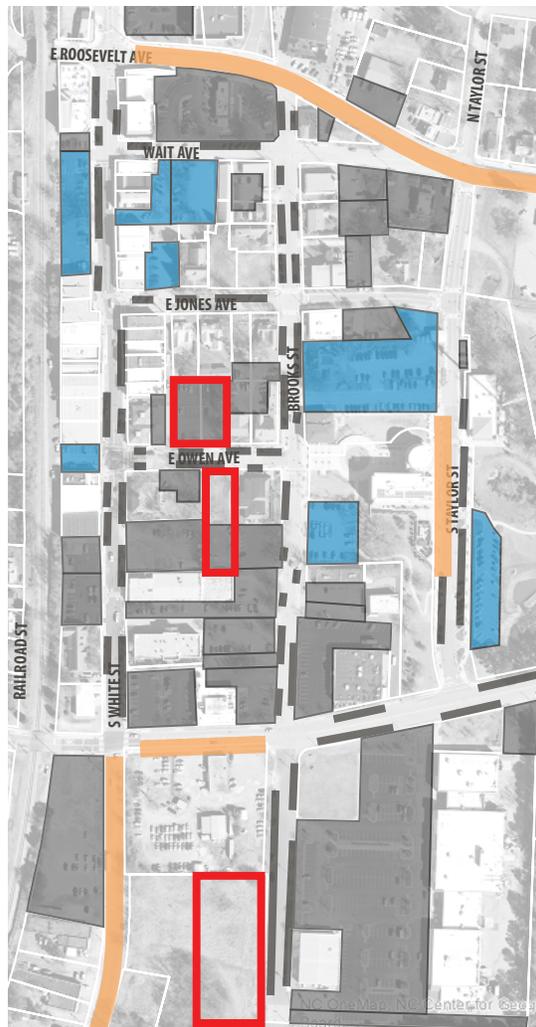
Wake Forest has two major centers of energy: the historic core along White Street and the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center. They are currently operating independently; we must connect them. Ultimately, we need a continuous, high quality, and vibrant pedestrian environment from White Street to the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center.



### Manage the Cars

Downtown has plenty of parking spaces. A detailed analysis of both private, public and on-street parking spaces was conducted. A total of 1,649 parking spaces were counted within the downtown core. Traditionally, this quantity should support well over half a million square feet of mixed use development.

However, enhancing management of the public parking, encouraging shared parking strategies with private lots as well as improving signage and awareness will help the existing parking spaces work more efficiently for all of the user groups in downtown.



Legend	
1155	private surface parking
261	on-street parking
233	public surface parking
122	potential on-street parking
[Red Box]	opportunities for temporary public parking



### Create a Destination

Wake Forest has done a superior job in providing programmed events to activate the downtown area. Successful downtowns add another layer by including activating elements which require no programming and are free interactive public spaces. Attracting families to downtown with spaces designed for children will be key in Wake Forest's continued evolution into a vibrant place. Downtown Wake Forest will offer a diversity of public spaces of varying sizes and degrees of activity to its patrons and residents. Experiencing these spaces and the connections between them must be safe and enjoyable.

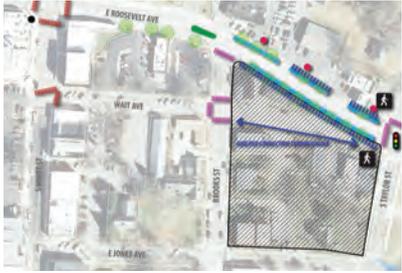


### Put People First

Wake Forest is committed to providing a pedestrian-friendly downtown; this requires planning for people. We have identified several tactical opportunities to engage the public in projects and events that will enhance the pedestrian realm downtown. Many of these opportunities are low cost and temporary, but high impact and memorable. There are several other opportunities for the Town to enhance the pedestrian realm through longer term, more permanent and costly projects, like streetscape enhancements at key intersections. This plan includes a range of short-term and long-term project ideas to serve as a guide that both public and private entities can use.



# 1.3 Top 10 Projects in 5 Years

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Install a parklet on White Street in front of the brewery</i></p> 	
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><i>Convert Owen Avenue to a shared festival street</i></p> 	
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><i>Light the bridge and create an iconic &amp; memorable gateway to downtown</i></p> 	
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><i>Close part of Wait Avenue and consolidate the block</i></p> 	
<p><b>5</b></p> <p><i>Implement a parking management program</i></p> 	



*Build an interactive water feature*



6



*Construct the Smith Creek greenway through downtown*



7



*Build a playground*



8



*Improve the Front Street intersection for pedestrians*



9



*Enhance wayfinding and signage to direct visitors to and throughout downtown*



10

## 1.4 Master Plan with Key Highlights

- 1** *Connect the neighborhood to downtown*  
We found opportunities to repair the disconnected and oversized blocks and create more connectivity between existing neighborhoods and downtown.
- 2** *Infill opportunities*  
Roosevelt Avenue is a major road leading into downtown Wake Forest and should be a prime address for new housing and adaptive reuse of older commercial buildings.
- 3** *Close part of Wait Avenue and create a new block*  
Wait Avenue between Brooks Street and Roosevelt Avenue is not useful or advantageous to the downtown street network. Closing it and creating a larger block will accommodate a cohesive redevelopment and contribute positively to downtown.
- 4** *Connect White Street to Town Hall using Owen Avenue as a festival street*  
By transforming Owen to a curbsless, shared street, we can connect White Street, the center of leisure and commercial activity, to Town Hall, the hub of civic energy.
- 5** *Connect Brooks Street & Holding Avenue amenities to White Street activity*  
The cluster of senior and civic amenities at Brooks Street and East Holding Avenue is disconnected from the activity on White Street, but as the crow flies, it is only a 6–8 minute walk. As Brooks Street is planned to connect through from East Holding Avenue to Elm Avenue, the public streetscape and private development must create a highly walkable experience.

### Net New Potential Buildout/Infill Calculations



461  
housing units



60,000 sf  
civic



expanded senior center  
& town hall + new  
community center



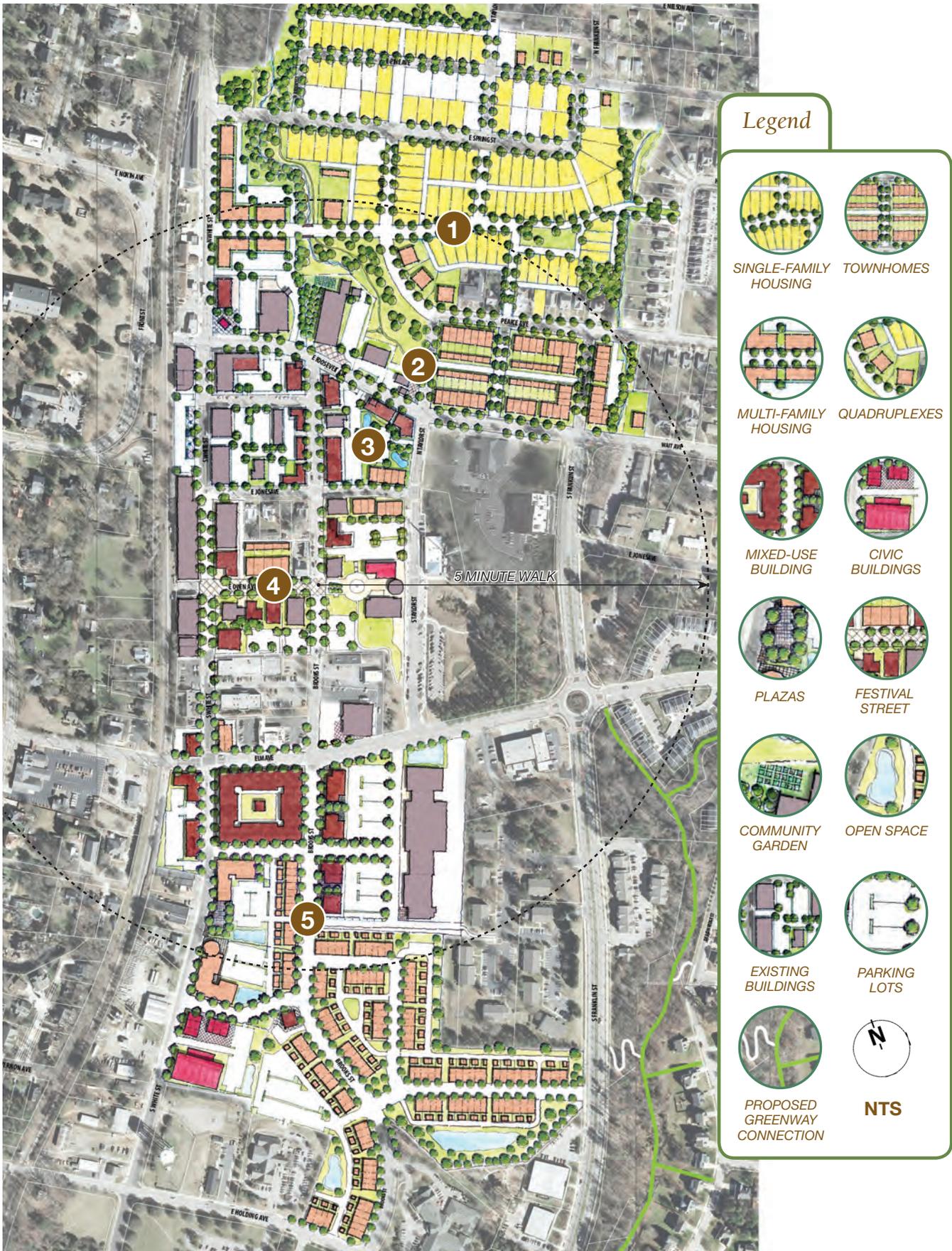
85,000 sf  
retail



16–24 room  
boutique hotel



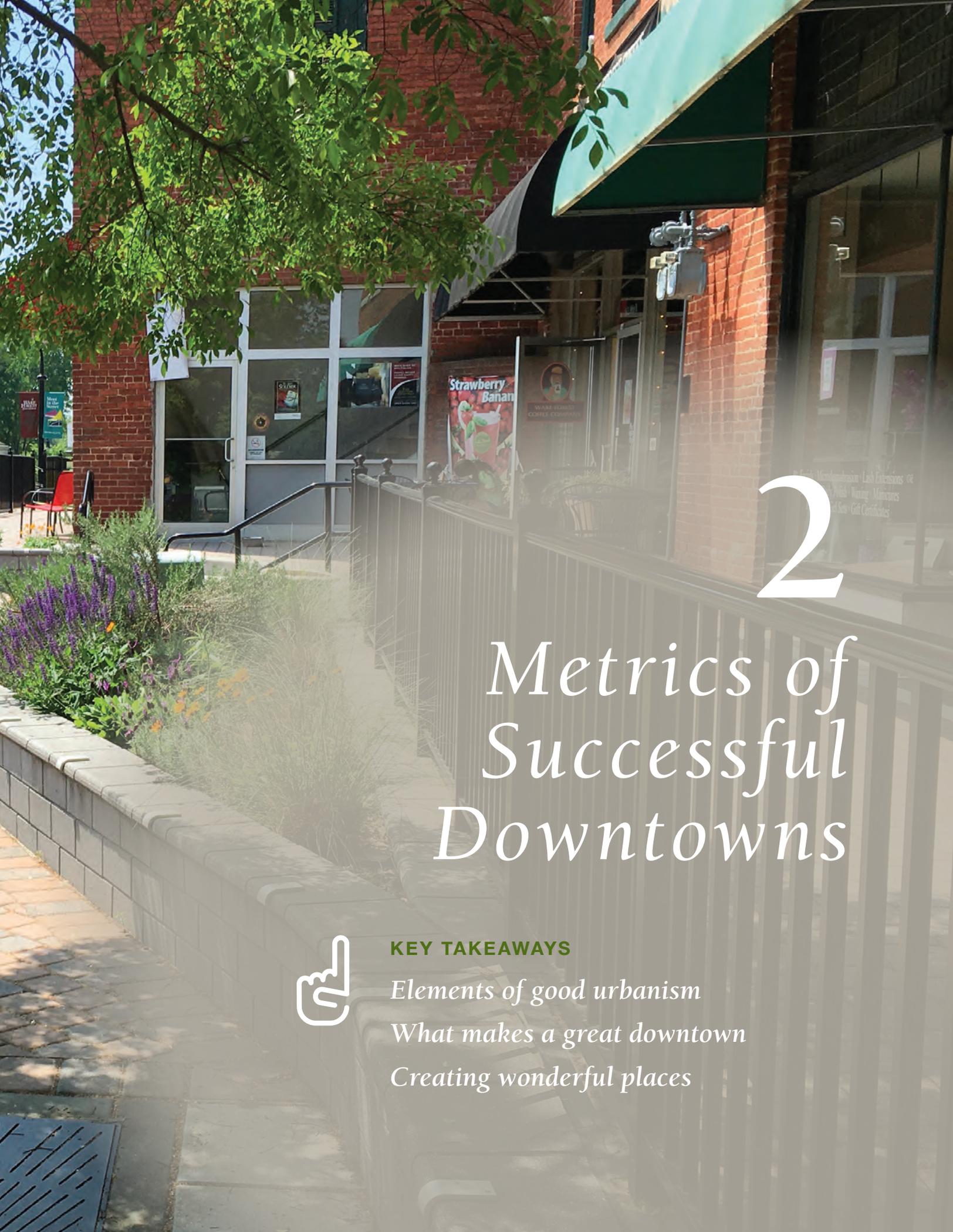
93,000 sf  
office



▲ Figure 1.4: Renaissance Master Plan (2016)



*Historic White Street with enhanced pedestrian-friendly streetscape*



# 2

## Metrics of Successful Downtowns



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Elements of good urbanism*

*What makes a great downtown*

*Creating wonderful places*

# 2 Metrics of Successful Downtowns

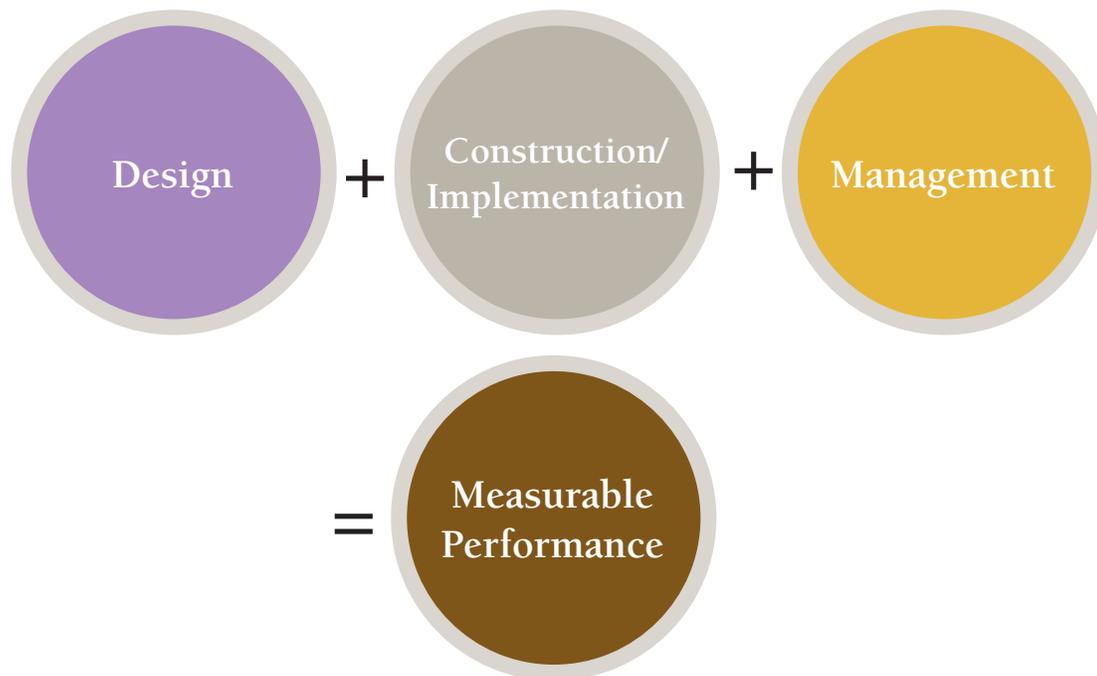


## 2.0 How is Great Urbanism Measured?

In a world where public funding is becoming more and more limited, capital projects have to bring a significant return on investment. We know that more and more people want to work in a walkable environment; it is not enough anymore to have a nice office building. People are seeking meaningful places...authentic spaces where they can live, work and play. Employers are using great places for recruitment and retention purposes. In turn, a diversity of employment opportunities in a downtown equals patrons to restaurants and retail.

Through research and experience, we have found that there are essential elements that help create successful downtown environments. In combination, these elements yield measurable performance indicators of success. We know it is not enough to simply get the design right; implementation and management are key to creating an environment where patrons want to spend money and time.

The old adage “if you build it they will come” is true only if you have a good code and good design bones in place along with proper management. The products of a successful downtown environment include more employment, a diverse population, higher sales per square foot, and overall positive economic development for a community.



## 2.1 Design Elements

Design elements that contribute to successful downtown environments include:

### Short Blocks & Dense Street Network

This feature provides enhanced walkability for people and increased connectivity for cars. The average block length between cross-streets should be shorter in a downtown environment because it feels more pedestrian in scale. It also means shorter distances between shops and creates a coherent network.



▲ *Short blocks and dense street networks*

### On-Street Parking

This element provides a one-ton safety barrier between moving cars and pedestrians. Ground floor retail also requires convenient parking to be successful. Retail will not survive without it; patrons see cars parked on the street as a signal of activity and a need to slow down and take a look. On-street parking also provides friction for moving traffic and provides an inherent traffic calming element.



▲ *On-street parking*

### Continuous Frontage

This element keeps pedestrians and bicyclists interested while traveling along the street. Research has proven that people are more likely to keep walking along a continuous frontage to see what is beyond. One vacant tenant space can create barriers to success, so maintaining active uses on the ground floor block by block is key.



▲ *Continuous frontage*

### Spatial Enclosure

The ratio of building height to street width is essential to creating a comfortable public realm. Too much enclosure can feel narrow and unsafe, too little can feel vast and empty to pedestrians. Achievable ratios vary based on right-of-way width, but street trees can help create spatial enclosure where buildings cannot. Ideal height to width ratios in the Renaissance Area should be between 1:1 and 1:2 (See Section 9.3.8).



▲ *Ideal spatial enclosure for a main street*

## 2.2 Implementation & Management Issues

Implementation of design features and management of the spaces and activities in a downtown contribute directly to the overall success of the place. Some keys include:

### Quality & Diversity of Public Space

Public space is a top requested element in downtowns. It is not enough to simply have one park or civic gathering space. Spaces of varying sizes programmed for a diversity of events are necessary for overall event success and energy.

### Keys to Parking

The key to parking in a downtown environment is that location needs to be considered over quantity. It is all about management. Parking problems are a good thing and mean that people are spending time and money in your downtown. This is an issue that needs to be re-evaluated every three to four years.

### Active Ground Floor Uses

Being a pedestrian is about two things...the journey and the destination. Activating the ground floor of buildings in your downtown is something that can be incorporated into the code. Humans innately have a sense of unease that can be triggered when passing a dead space or boarded-up facade and often prevents us from continuing the journey.

### Ambient Illumination

Lighting in a downtown is about both safety and interest. There are different zones of lighting: the lighting of storefronts, lighting of the general pedestrian pathway, and street lighting.

### Hours of Operation

Twenty-five percent of retail sales occur after 5 o'clock in the afternoon. The coordination of store hours ensures a more predictable environment for potential shoppers. The object is to create an environment about selling things where people already want to spend time.

### Clustering

Restaurants are key to creating destination downtowns. But, rather than being separated and isolated, clustering these types of uses is much more effective and provides options, variety and diversity to visitors.



▲ Layering of signage



▲ Quality and diversity of public space



▲ *Parking management*



▲ *Active ground floor uses*



▲ *Ambient illumination*



▲ *Hours of operation*

## 2.3 Measurable Performance

Residential population within a walkable distance to downtown is one of those performance measures that often comes before the other design and implementation elements. Wake Forest is fortunate to have quality housing within a half mile of the downtown core. The other elements shown below are good measures of the success of a downtown environment. All of these feed and complement one another.

### **Daytime Employment**

Total employment population in downtown as a percent of the overall community employment.

### **Commercial Activity**

Sales per square foot should be higher than in the suburban areas of the community.

### **Pedestrian Activity**

Density of pedestrian activity on White Street is a key indicator of success.

## 2.4 Walkability

*Walkability is about the journey and the destination.*



*The journey must be comfortable and well-connected.*



*The destination must be lively and entertaining.*

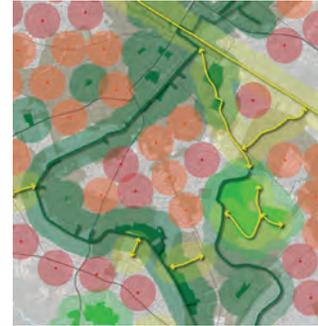


## 2.5 The 7 “D’s”

Understanding the dynamics that create successful downtowns can often seem mysterious. Why does one place succeed and another does not? It can often feel like the answer is something intangible, because there appears to be no other logical explanation. Decades of working in a range of downtown environments has revealed a set of key attributes that contribute to creating successful places. When these 7 “D’s” combine with strong business owners, capable municipal staff and political leadership, both economic and social success follow. A brief explanation of these seven essentials can be found on the next two pages.



The easier it is for people to travel to and from downtown Wake Forest, the more attractive it will be to draw patrons wanting to share experiences and spend money. It is essential to provide adequate wayfinding to not only help people get to the core but also navigate their experience once they arrive.



## Development Density



Small towns such as Wake Forest typically thrive at a density of 2–4 stories within the core. This is not a hard and fast rule but a good baseline for future development.



## Distance to Transit



Downtowns with access to transit services can accommodate higher volumes of users without adding pressure on parking. Ensuring safe and comfortable journeys from neighborhoods to transit stops is key to user safety.



## Dynamic Activity



Vibrant downtowns are dynamic in nature with a mixture of sidewalk displays, outdoor dining, creative signage, diverse public spaces and enticing window shopping.





## Human-Scaled Details



Several design details are critical to the public realm in downtowns. Some are: pedestrian lighting; seating; landscaping; the arrangement of windows and doors on buildings; and sidewalk width. They contribute to a human scaled environment where people feel comfortable and safe. Designing places for people is a key tenet of successful placemaking.



## Land Use Diversity



Highly active downtowns not only need a mix of uses within the core but also a significant number of residential units and employment centers within a five to ten minute walk. This diversity of land uses contributes to the number of people within walking distance to downtown retail and public amenities.



## Street Design



Downtown streets should accommodate two way multi-modal traffic flow and provide on-street parking for retail patrons. Streets should include comfortable sidewalks for pedestrians with street trees and a variety of furnishings.

## 2.6 Creating Great Places

Great downtowns are places where people come together. They include:



▲ *Places to relax*



▲ *Places to shop*



▲ *Places to eat*



▲ *Places to play*

**Great places are complex, organic and sometimes messy.**



*“If you plan cities for cars and traffic,  
you get cars and traffic.  
If you plan for people and places,  
you get people and places.”*

— FRED KENT, *Project for Public Spaces*



*The clock on White Street  
in the historic downtown*

# 3

## Existing Conditions



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Recent rapid growth in Wake Forest*

*A need for more active ground floor uses*

*Lots of infill development potential*

*Opportunities for gateway enhancement*

# 3 Existing Conditions



## 3.1 Planning Area Overview

### Geography

The Renaissance Area encompasses approximately 220 acres within the heart of Wake Forest. The area is generally bound by the CSX rail line to the west, NC 98 to the south, and the Historic and Central Business Districts to the north and the east. The downtown includes a mixture of retail, service, office, governmental, residential, and light industrial uses. A variety of undeveloped properties and vacant lots are also scattered throughout the planning area.

### Land Use

The majority of the central and northern sections of the Renaissance Area is zoned Urban Mixed Use (UMX), while the southern portion is predominantly zoned for Residential Mixed Use (RMX) development. Additional zoning classifications include the Renaissance Area Historic Core (RAHC), Open Space (OS), General Residential 3-Conditional Use (CUGR3) and Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMX). The RAHC incorporates the Downtown Historic District, while CUGR3 and NMX occur on the eastern edge of the Renaissance Area and serve to transition from Downtown to residential neighborhoods. OS encompasses the urban parks and greenways in the planning area.

### Historic District

The Downtown Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, developed to the east of the railroad tracks across from the original Wake Forest College campus. At least two known fires, most recently in 1915, destroyed many of the historic downtown's first generation buildings. Thus, the majority of the historic downtown's buildings are post-1915 construction, yet they provide significant architectural examples throughout the downtown.

The CSX railroad tracks form the western boundary of the Renaissance Area. Buildings originally fronted the tracks, with the rear of the buildings facing present-day White Street. Elevated sidewalks along portions of the western side of South White Street offer a significant reminder of original building orientation and their importance in relation to servicing the railroad.

### Centers of Activity

There are two major centers of activity in the Renaissance Area, the historic core and the Renaissance Plaza shopping center. Numerous specialty retailers, restaurants, and small businesses exist throughout the downtown, primarily along South White





▲ Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center



▲ Wake Forest Town Hall



▲ H.L. Miller Park



▲ South White Street light industrial

Street, Jones Avenue, and East Owen Avenue. Although the town's Main Street is located to the west of the planning area, South White Street functions as the community's specialty retail and business core. The Renaissance Plaza shopping center is located along South Brooks Street and contains a variety of popular entertainment and food-related businesses.

### Civic Uses

A variety of town buildings are situated east of the Downtown Historic District between South Brooks Street and South Taylor Street, including the Town Hall, Police Department, and Public Facilities Department. Adjacent to the Town Hall complex lies H.L. Miller Park, a 1.3 acre park replete with picnic tables and benches. A greenway traverses the park, which is proposed to connect to the town's greenway system along the Spring Branch creek in the future.

### Character Areas

The center of the Renaissance Area lies between Elm Avenue and East Holding Avenue. A variety of uses are scattered throughout this location, including retail, commercial, multi-family, and light industrial. Additionally, there are several vacant properties located within the heart of the planning area.

The area surrounding East Holding Avenue in the southern portion of the Renaissance Area contains a variety of institutional uses, such as the Post Office, the Wake County–Wake Forest Branch Library, the Northern Wake Senior Center, and an assisted living center. The Heath Ridge Village subdivision and a small office park are located at the southern-most portion of South White Street. The Franklin Academy Charter School also occupies two buildings along South Franklin

Street near the intersection of Holding Avenue. Some medical office uses have also been developed on South Franklin Street. At the time of the charrette, a large townhome development was underway on the east side of Franklin Street near NC 98 and another townhome project just south of the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center was in planning stages.

NC 98 marks the southern boundary of the Renaissance Area. Since Franklin Street has been extended to NC 98, traffic has bypassed the historic downtown area of Wake Forest somewhat. This has served to make the core more pedestrian-friendly, but it has also made downtown more isolated from all of the potential visitors and consumers traveling along the NC 98 corridor.

Within the northern portion of the planning area, a variety of commercial uses dot the landscape along Wait Avenue and Roosevelt Avenue (Business 98) between North Franklin Street and the bridge at Roosevelt Avenue. Uses include an auto parts store, fast food restaurants, and a dry cleaner.

### **Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary**

Although outside of the Renaissance Area, it is also important to highlight the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, which is located across the railroad tracks northwest of the Downtown Historic District. In 1946, the R.J. Reynolds Corporation offered Wake Forest College \$40 million to relocate their campus, presently Wake Forest University, to Winston-Salem. The Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary now occupies that campus and is home to approximately 3,500 students in undergraduate and graduate programs.



▲ *South Franklin Street medical office*



▲ *Roosevelt Avenue commercial uses*



▲ *Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*

## 3.2 Area Growth

Wake County continues to experience rapid growth and development. The Raleigh metropolitan area continues to be reported and ranked by a wide range of sources as one of the most attractive places to live in the country and one of the hottest development markets in the nation. The cost of living is relatively low and the quality of life remains high when compared to peer cities nationwide. Similarly, Wake Forest and northern Wake County have been experiencing significant growth and development over the past 20 years. The population of Wake Forest itself more than doubled from 2000 to 2010 and is forecasted to continue growing at a similar pace over the next 20 years.

Such rapid growth has and will continue to have significant impacts on Wake Forest's retail market trade area, transportation system, and economic activity. The diagram on the following page illustrates

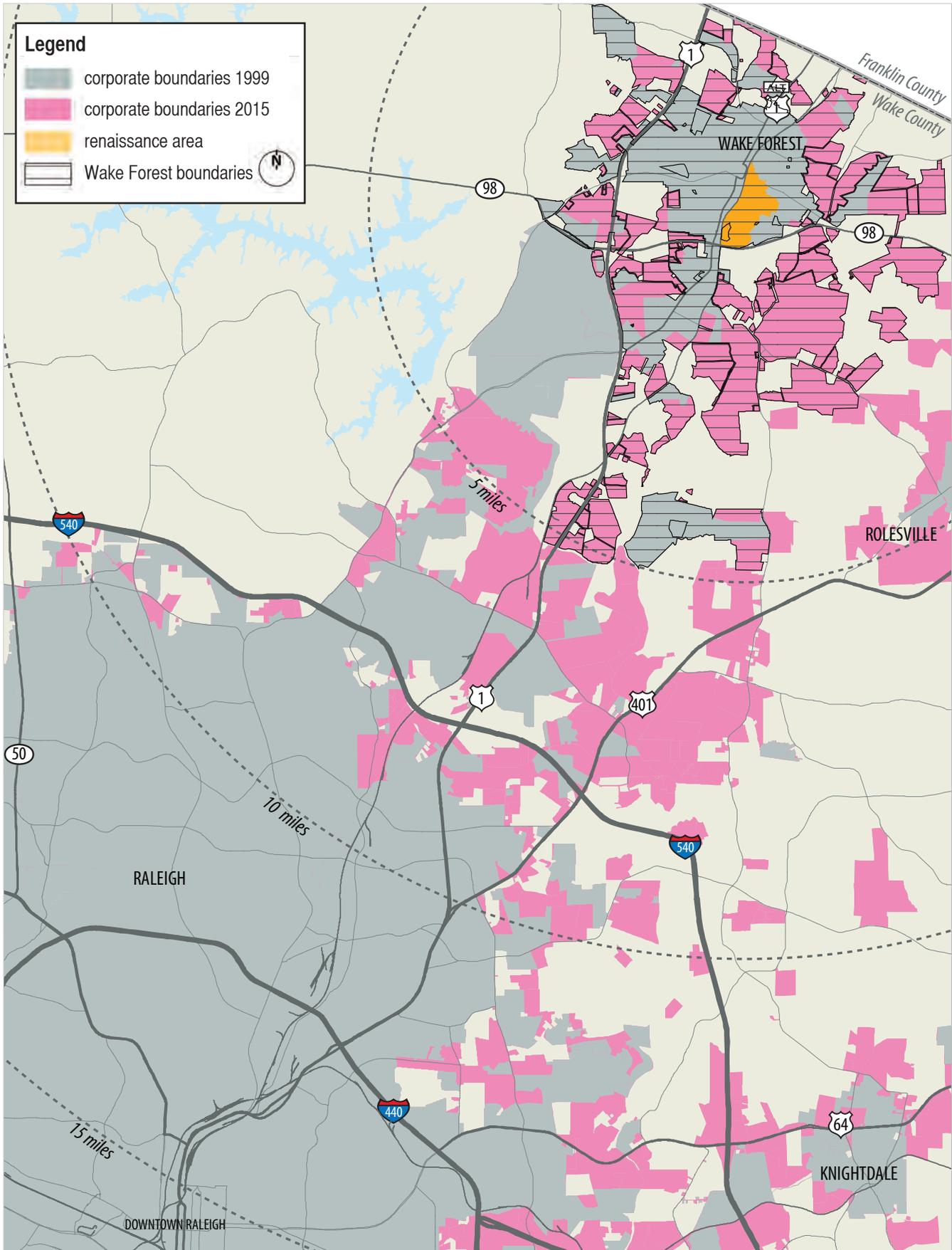
northern Wake County's change in corporate boundaries from 1999 to 2015. The corporate limits of Wake Forest and Rolesville have expanded significantly, especially along the corridors of US 401 North and US 1 North/Capital Boulevard between Raleigh and Wake Forest.

Twenty years ago, Wake Forest was the edge of the Raleigh metro region and the town was much different. Now, there are many more amenities, homes and residents, and traffic flowing through the town as part of the larger regional network. Wake Forest is part of a greater whole, rather than the hole in the doughnut. The town is growing with thousands of new residents projected to come year after year. Moving forward, the Town of Wake Forest must dictate how it will grow, especially in the Renaissance Area where there is so much opportunity for new development and redevelopment.

### KEY POPULATION GROWTH STATISTICS

- » From 2000 to 2013, the population of Wake Forest grew **151%**
- » Wake Forest total households grew from **4,617** in 2000 to **10,521** in 2010
- » Wake Forest is expected to add **1,000** new residents every year over the next 10 years
- » The neighboring community of Rolesville grew by almost **320%** from 2000 to 2010

(Source: Wake Forest Economic Development)



▲ Figure 3.2: Northern Wake County Corporate Boundaries 1999–2015

### 3.3 Existing Development Pattern

A figure ground diagram is generated by illustrating the building footprints and the blocks. This diagram clearly displays the distance between buildings and conveys how many buildings make up each block within the study area. Generally, high quality urban environments are composed of buildings that define the edges of the block and create continuous frontage along the street network. Typically, where there are no buildings on a block, that space is usually composed of parking lots, vacant lots or wooded areas.

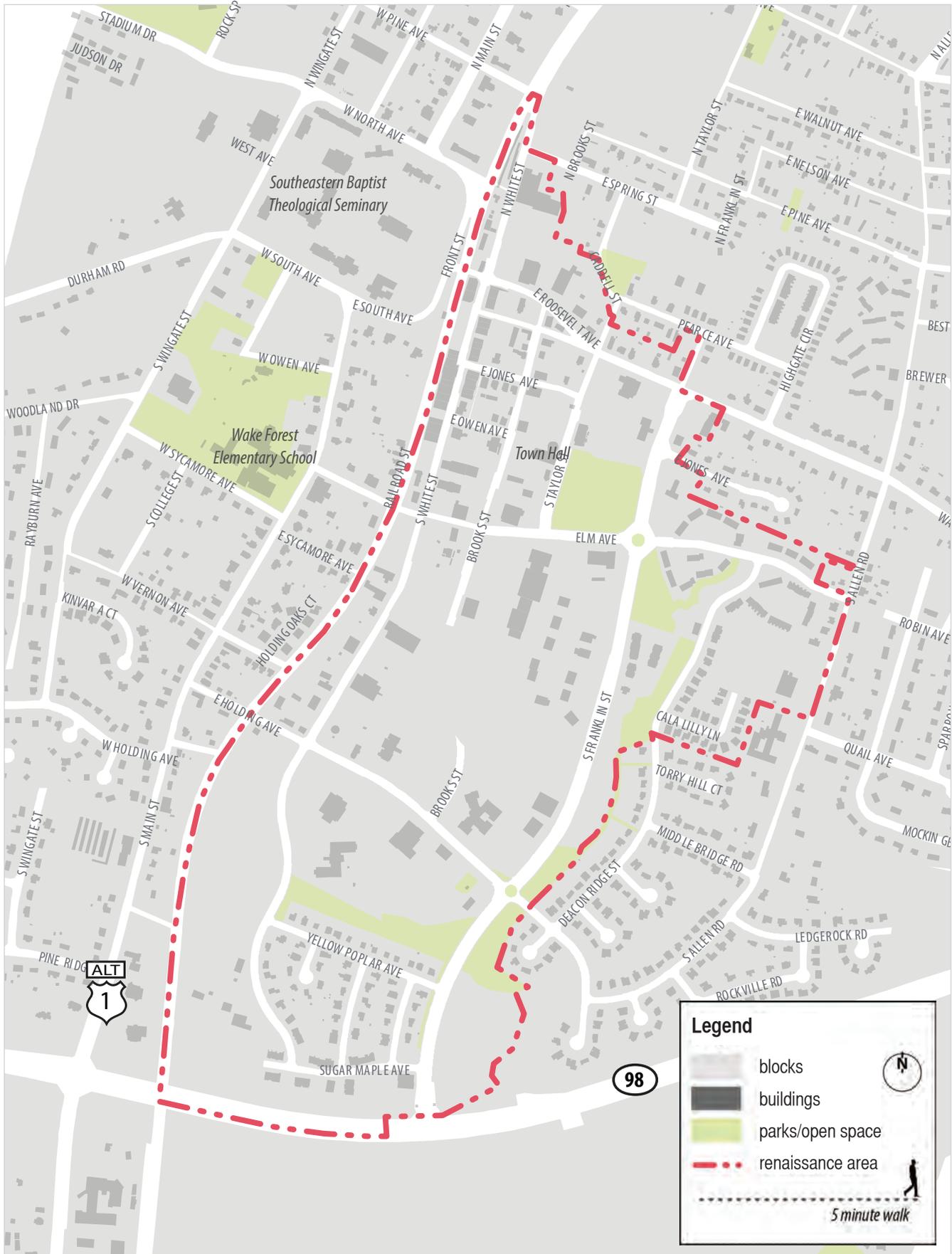
The figure ground diagram on the following page clearly shows areas of more tightly packed development in the downtown core along White Street. This area is the most pedestrian friendly and offers a variety of urban amenities, including shops and restaurants. However, many of the blocks to the north, east and south of the downtown historic core have several large gaps, or vacant undeveloped lots, between buildings and some blocks contain few buildings at all.



▲ *Consistent, cohesive block development on White Street*



▲ *Inconsistent development pattern on Owen Avenue*



▲ Figure 3.3: Existing Conditions Figure Ground

## 3.4 Ripe & Firm Analysis

Prior to creating the master plan, a ripe and firm analysis was conducted on all parcels in the study area. To complete this analysis, a walking or windshield survey was conducted for each parcel and the development that occupied them. Each parcel was classified into one of three categories: firm,

opportunity or ripe. This analysis was used to identify areas both likely and unlikely to change. Often, there are areas that are not clearly one or the other and are identified simply as opportunities. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 3.4.



### Firm

- » Existing multi-story, mixed-use building with historic character and architectural significance, built up to the street with active ground floor uses
- » Fully occupied with tenant mix that supports vibrancy



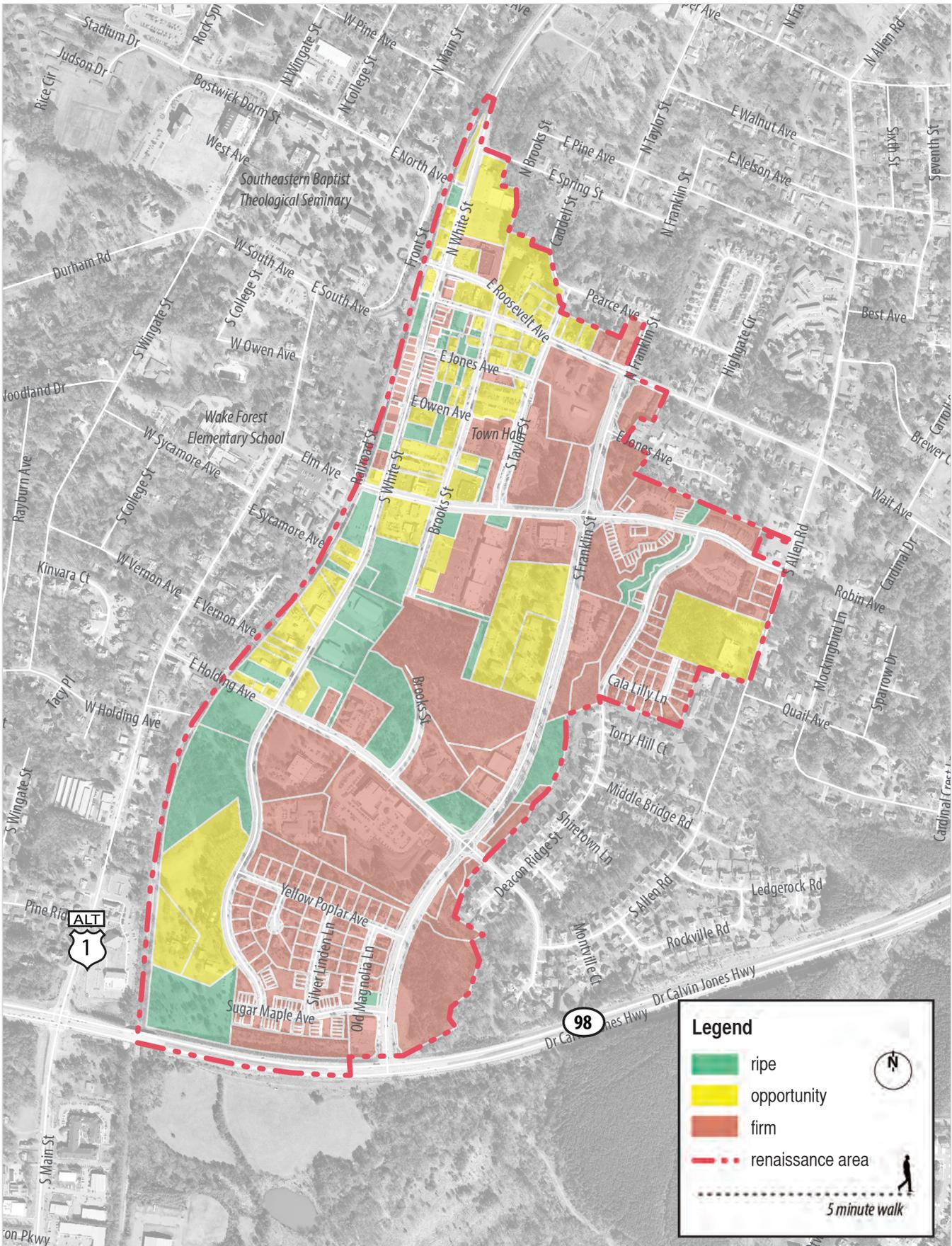
### Opportunity

- » Underutilized property, but currently occupied with an active business
- » Current use is not conducive or additive to a vibrant and walkable downtown
- » Classified as an 'opportunity' because the parcel would have a more positive impact on the success of the downtown with a highly active use, such as a restaurant, market or brewery



### Ripe

- » Vacant parcel at the edge of the downtown historic core
- » Not currently utilized for formal parking and is well-suited for a variety of significant development opportunities



▲ Figure 3.4: Ripe & Firm Analysis

## 3.5 Retail & Restaurants

Existing retail and restaurant offerings in the downtown are predominantly clustered on White Street from Roosevelt to Owen and in the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center on Elm Avenue (see Figure 3.5). White Street offers the most establishments and the widest variety, which is appropriate for the most prominent street in downtown Wake Forest. A variety of restaurants offer a range of different cuisines in downtown. The coffee shop culture has emerged in Wake Forest and there are three different coffee shops, one being a full-fledged coffee bean roaster.

There are also a variety of retail products sold on White Street from boutique women's clothing to art to antiques to hardware and garden supplies.

There is, however, an opportunity to attract more restaurants and retailers to White Street, as there are some vacant shopfronts. Additionally, a few spaces are occupied by non-retail uses that do little to activate the street. Such businesses could locate anywhere in downtown or in greater Wake Forest, but do not have to be located on the main shopping and entertainment street, much less on the ground floor.



▲ *Shorty's on White Street*



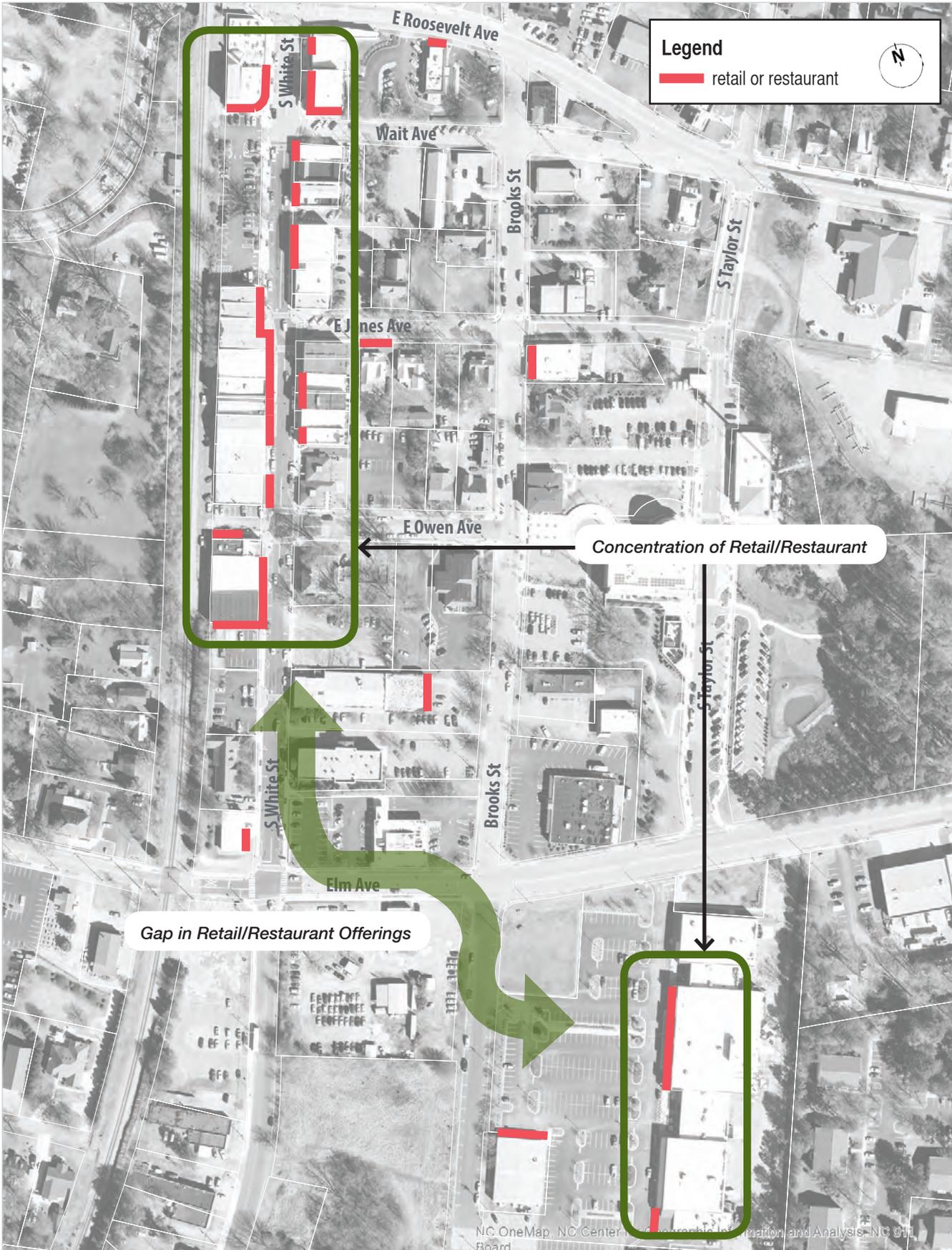
▲ *White Street retail shops*



▲ *Back Alley Coffee Roasters on Brooks Street*



▲ *Food truck on White Street*



▲ Figure 3.5: Retail & Restaurant Frontage

## 3.6 Active Ground Floor Use

Active ground floor uses are critical to a vibrant downtown. Not only do the uses need to be active, but ideally, they should align closely with the desired character that Wake Forest is pursuing and is sought after by potential visitors. As pedestrians and visitors walk or drive down White Street, they need to see other people visibly enjoying themselves in the downtown; this is a compounding effect — people beget people.

Figure 3.6 on the opposite page depicts our analysis of the ground floor space in the core of the Renaissance Area. Below are descriptions of each category from the diagram:



### Firm

- » Active throughout the day and night
- » Attracts a wide variety of visitors/patrons
- » Fully occupied with tenant mix that supports vibrancy



### Underutilized

- » Could be more active with new tenants or a change in the facade to function more like a traditional storefront, open, permeable and transparent



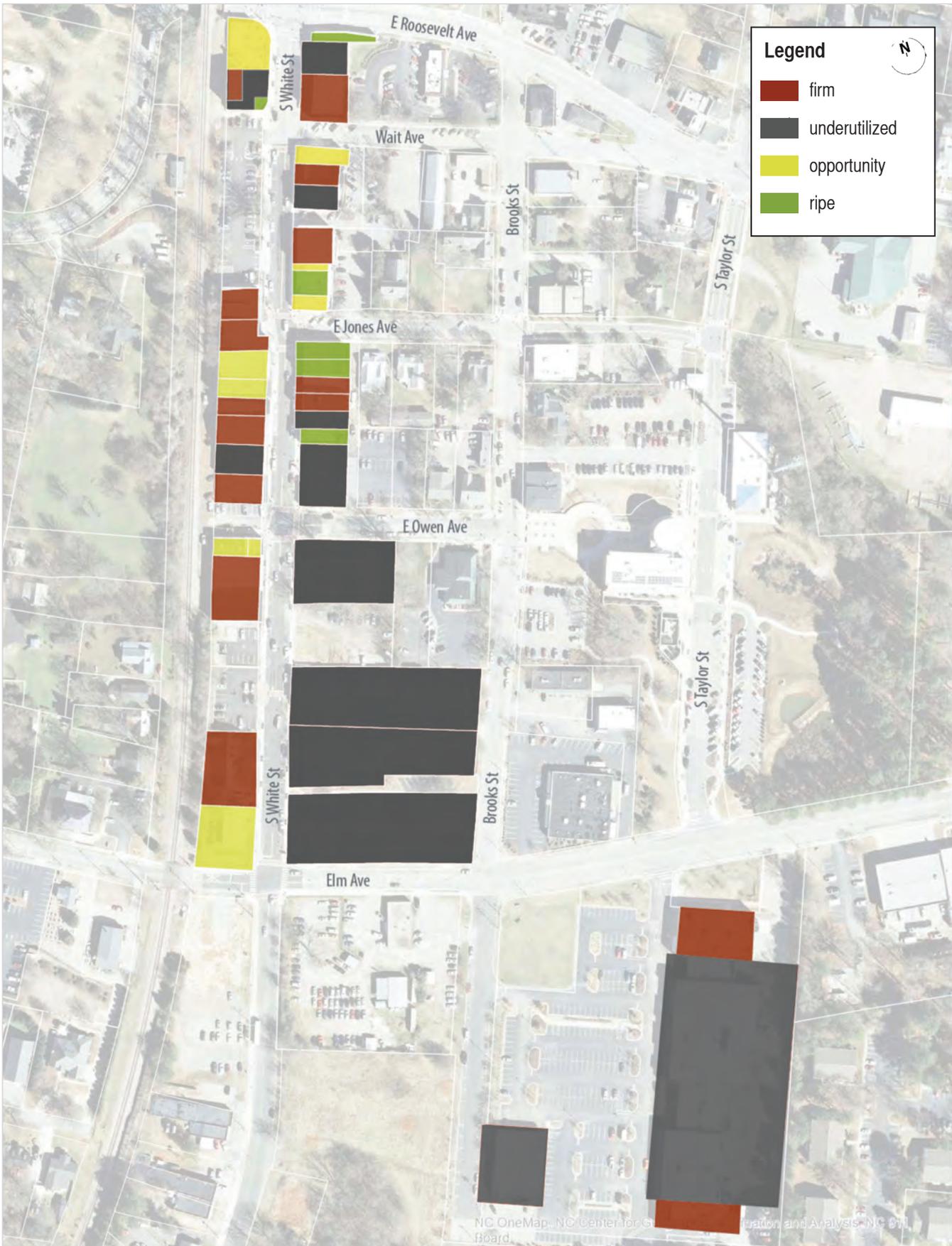
### Opportunity

- » Tenant mix could be more supportive of street activity
- » Small change needed, like adding outdoor seating or operable windows that open to the street



### Ripe

- » Vacant storefront
- » Needs a tenant that adds to the vibrancy of the street
- » Physical enhancements to the building and facade may be necessary



▲ Figure 3.6: Ground Floor Activity

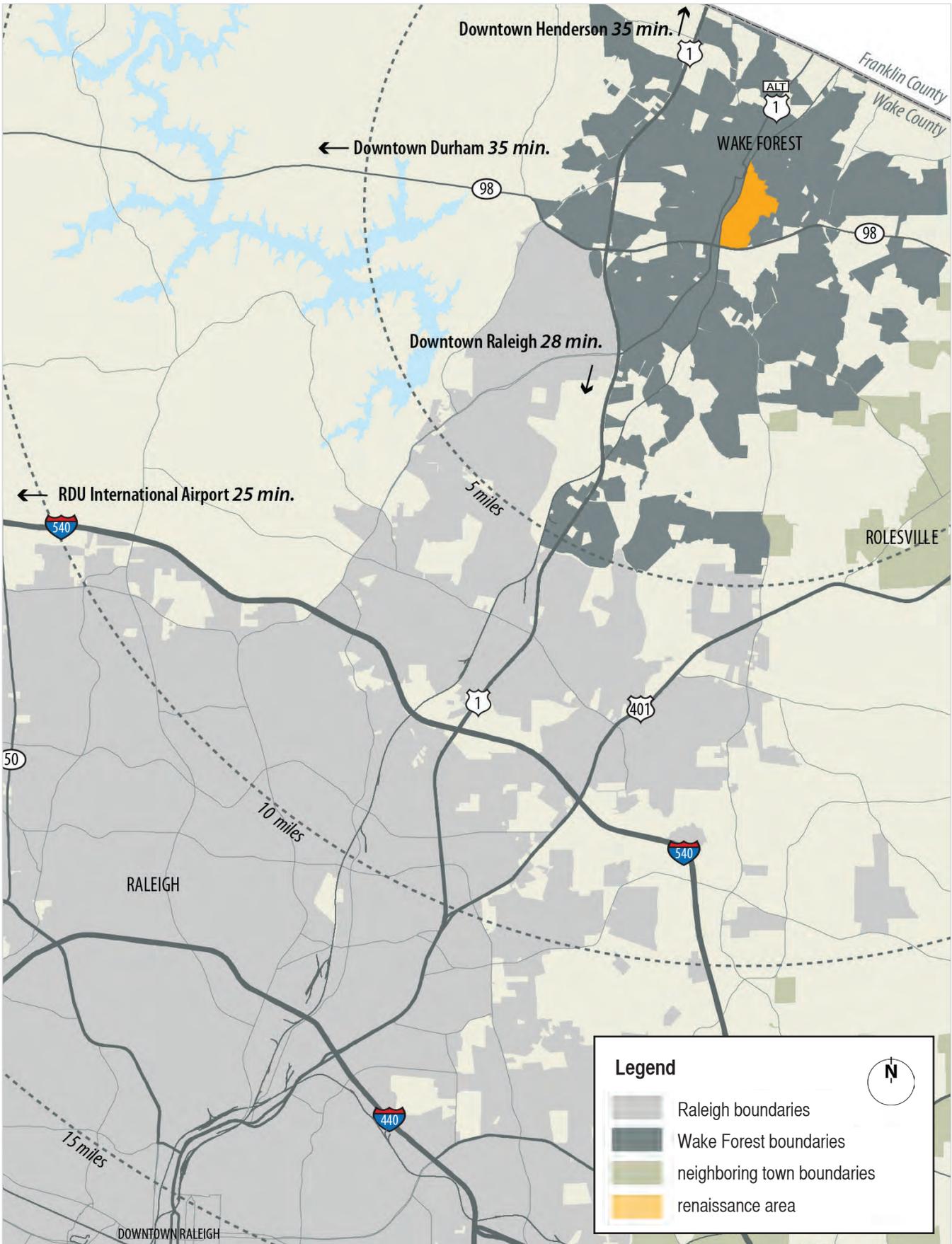
## 3.7 Regional Transportation

Wake Forest has a rich regional road network, which is one of the qualities that make this town so attractive to live in. In less than 30 minutes by car (and without much traffic), one can travel to downtown Raleigh, three major shopping malls and the RDU International Airport. Just beyond is downtown Durham and the Durham Performing Arts Center. Regional highways like I-40, I-85 and I-95 that connect the eastern United States are also relatively close to Wake Forest. Locally, this transportation network has connected Wake Forest citizens to nearby jobs and amenities. But, the major arterial corridors of US 1/Capital Boulevard, US 401 and NC 98 are often clogged with traffic.

Wake Forest offers a great alternative to commuting to Raleigh — the Wake Forest–Raleigh Express. This bus runs from downtown Wake Forest to downtown Raleigh with a stop at the Triangle Town Center. There are morning and afternoon departures during rush hour. At only \$3 per one way trip, the Wake Forest–Raleigh Express is a very convenient transportation option, an alternative to commuting by single occupant vehicle.

Soon, Wake Forest residents will begin to make the choice to avoid the commutes to Raleigh for employment and North Hills Mall for shopping; in fact, many already do. They will choose instead to live, work and play in Wake Forest almost exclusively. The best way to prepare for this growth and change in lifestyle that the data and trends are predicting is to give people mobility options. If the main roads are more congested, then well-connected neighborhood streets will offer our residents many other choices to get around.

We will prioritize interconnected two-lane streets over multi-lane thoroughfares. In addition, in dispersing this traffic around the community on smaller, lower speed streets rather than concentrating it on a few large, high-speed roads, we will continue to move the same amount of vehicles while ensuring safe options for pedestrians and cyclists. Ultimately, this vision of a street network will be the bones of our walkable and bikable urban neighborhoods as we develop in a smart way over the next few decades.



▲ Figure 3.7: Connections to the Region

## 3.8 Area Walkability

Increasingly, whether an area is walkable, or not, has become very important to making places successful. Investors, businesses, employees and residents alike are increasingly desiring more and more walkability in the places they live, work and play. Several factors impact the walkability of a location:

- » the amount and variety of amenities that are within 1/4–1/2 mile
- » connected sidewalks and other off-street paths
- » the quality of the streetscape and pedestrian environment

Walk Score ([www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)) uses an algorithm to calculate the walkability index of a location. Amenities such as businesses, parks, shops, theaters, schools and other

common destinations within a 1/4 mile distance are given more points and the farther away the amenity, the less points are awarded. High walkability correlates to significant increases in real estate value and desirability. Figure 3.8 on the opposite page shows the walkability index, the Walk Score, of neighborhoods in and around the Renaissance Area. The historic core of downtown scores fairly high, as expected, but the Walk Score drops quickly as the neighborhoods get farther and farther from downtown. As a point of reference, Manhattan, NY receives a perfect Walk Score of 100. Franklin Street in downtown Chapel Hill, NC gets a walkscore of 86 and Fayetteville Street in downtown Raleigh gets a 78.

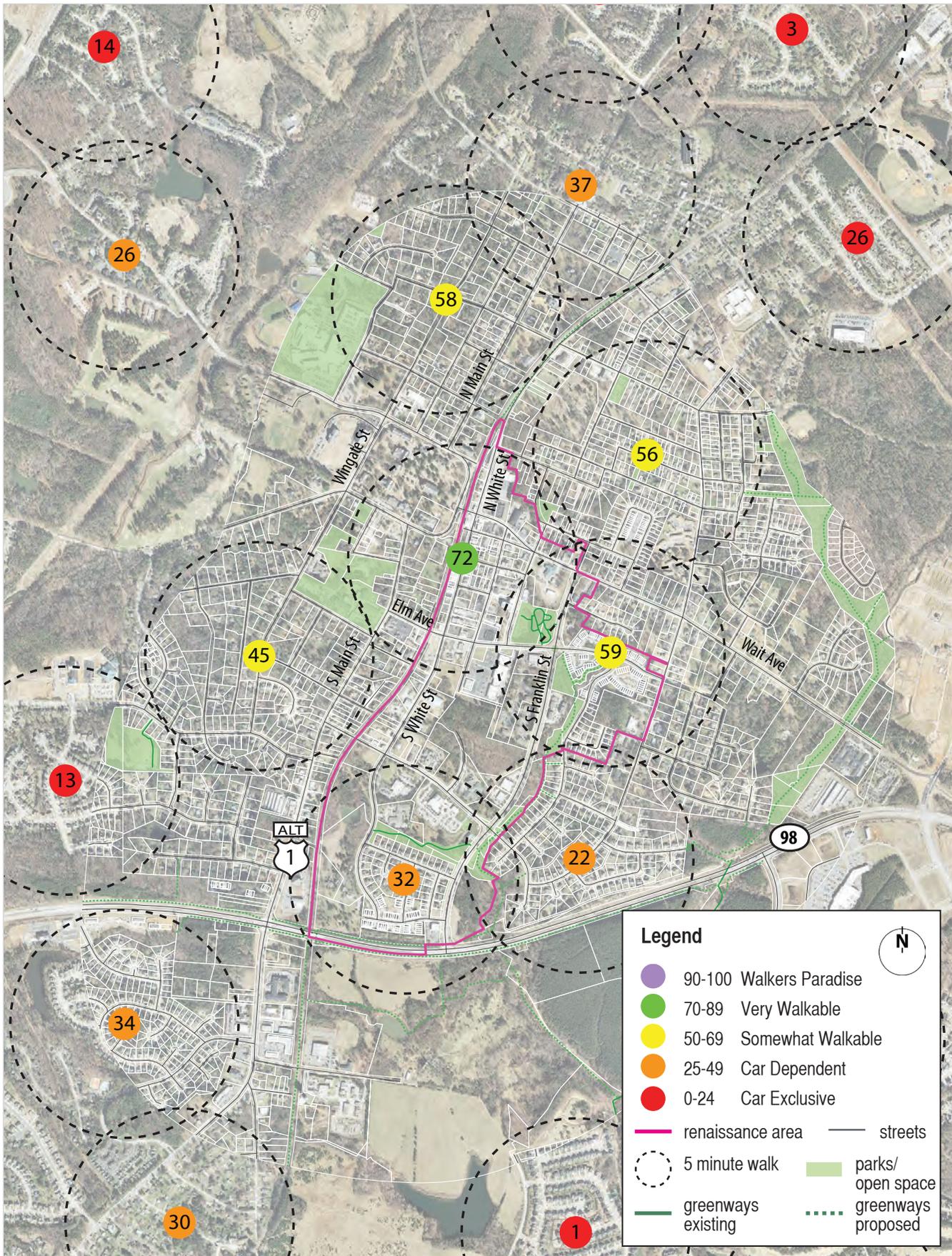
*Walkability is about the journey  
and the destination.*



▲ *Highly walkable historic core*



▲ *Opportunity to improve walkability along E. Jones Ave*



▲ Figure 3.8: Walkscore by Neighborhood

## 3.9 Gateways

Gateways are key entry points to an area and are often underappreciated though they should be significant, iconic and memorable components of downtowns. The Renaissance Area has several gateways, some major and several minor, but none of which is “iconic.” Franklin Street at NC 98 is a gateway, but it is very distant from the historic core and Franklin Street does not connect directly into

downtown. The most relevant gateway is at Roosevelt Avenue and the rail underpass, as well as the intersection of White Street and Roosevelt Avenue. The gateway should be enhanced with elements that give visitors a sense of arrival and mark the entry to downtown. Detailed recommendations follow in Chapter 9.

### *Prominent Gateway Enhancement Opportunities*



▲ Existing nondescript gateway into downtown from the SEBTS campus



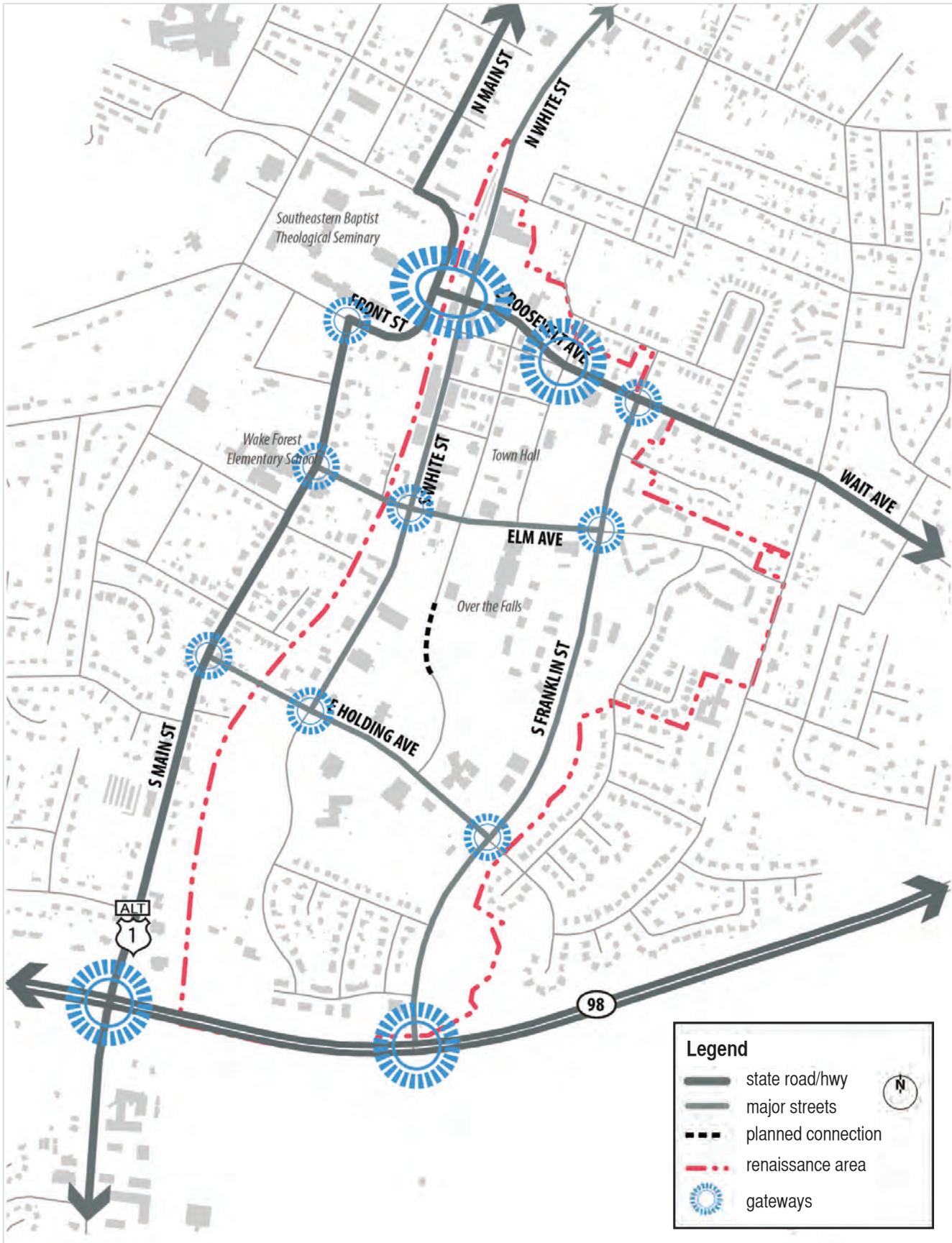
▲ Enhanced gateway with decorative crosswalk, graphic art pavement treatment and monument signage



▲ Existing Roosevelt Avenue bridge view of gateway into downtown from the S.E.B.T.S campus



▲ Enhanced gateway with playful colors and the Wake Forest name illuminated



▲ Figure 3.9: Key Gateways into Downtown



*Wake Forest citizens and stakeholders discussing draft concepts of the Renaissance Plan during a presentation at Town Hall*

# 4

## Summary of Public Input



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

*Broad stakeholder input*

*Community workshop results*

*Favorite characteristics of Wake Forest*

*Favorite places in Wake Forest*

## 4 Summary of Public Input



### 4.1 Public Process Overview

The planning process for the Renaissance Plan Update involved several outreach strategies and opportunities for the citizens of Wake Forest to participate. Our desire was to create a meaningful dialogue with the community that would help mold the vision for Wake Forest's downtown area. With both on-site opportunities to interact with the design team along with an online portal known as mySidewalk, citizens of all ages and ability levels were part of the process. Interested individuals or groups were also invited to email their input to [downtowndesign@wakeforestnc.gov](mailto:downtowndesign@wakeforestnc.gov).

### 4.2 Steering Committee

Mayor Vivian Jones appointed a group of Wake Forest citizens who helped guide the consultants and city staff throughout the nine month process. This steering committee met several times and were key participants in the public design charrette. Each member was charged with encouraging participation from neighbors, colleagues and friends.



▲ Public Kickoff Workshop small group mapping exercise

## 4.3 Stakeholder Interviews

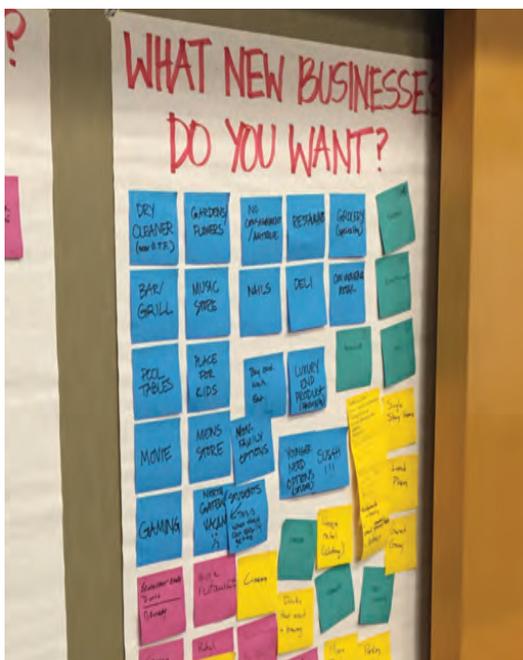
The design team conducted a reconnaissance trip that included two days of stakeholder interviews on March 30–31. The meetings were focused around various topics and city staff identified and invited specific individuals to participate. Local merchants, realtors, elected officials, and property owners were targeted as part of these interviews. Key takeaways are summarized below:

- » Businesses are owned by both lifelong residents and transplants from other parts of the country; most merchants truly care about Wake Forest.
- » The last 7–8 years has seen a shift in more people knowing that downtown exists and loving the quaint “mom and pop” feel of the area.
- » Merchants have tried to evolve their product selections to serve the new customer base; shift in sensitivity to buy local and avoid chains.
- » General feeling is that the downtown streetscape improvements and the addition of White Street Brewing have had the most impact on the shift in demographics visiting downtown.
- » Some businesses seem disconnected from the core, particularly those down at the Renaissance Center; more private investment is forthcoming on that end of town.
- » Staying open later is a challenge and is perceived as being cost prohibitive.
- » There is lots of tenant interest in downtown buildings; have found challenges with landlord expectations and viable tenant spaces.
- » Apex, Durham, Asheville, Savannah, Pinehurst and New Bern are cited examples of desirable downtowns to emulate.
- » Downtown is difficult to find; improved signage/wayfinding is necessary.
- » Housing market is a bedroom community of Raleigh; SEBTS campus draws families and older population into town.
- » Current demographic moving in: mostly younger families (30s and 40s), large retirement draw from northeast.



▲ Stakeholder meeting focused on retail in downtown

- » Parking Issues: some feel the need for a public garage, business valet service, public/private trolley service through downtown, golf cart service, white horse service, improved parking signage, people believe the parking problem is perceived and not actual, unwillingness to walk, shared parking should be investigated, angled parking conversion where possible, removal of 2-hour parking, park and ride options.
- » White Street receives the most attention for improvements and investment; desire to include neglected areas such as Brooks Street and north of Roosevelt with signage and beautification.
- » Downtown needs to be a destination with more consumer related retail and entertainment where people want to come spend the entire day; Wakefield/Heritage need to be customers of downtown.
- » Downtown needs more restaurants including a finer dining option.
- » The Renaissance Area needs more investment in gateways.
- » Town marketing has helped with communications with a fantastic app and neighborhood notices; continue even more cross promotion with merchants.
- » Events have made a big difference in activity level in downtown; may need to consider adding a public restroom in downtown area and a parking garage; Art after Hours, Dirt Day, Friday Night on White...are bringing business to downtown. 99% survey respondents say their business increases 50%.
- » Strong demand for current apartments and townhomes under construction in downtown area; this will yield more patrons in walking distance of the core.
- » Downtown needs a major water feature, music for ambiance, and access to water for irrigation outside of businesses; strive to be a pet-friendly downtown.



▲ Public input method used during the charrette



▲ Public presentation following the charrette updating stakeholders on the project

Monday		Tuesday	
1 pm	Public Utilities	9 am	Event Programming
2:30 pm	Historic District & Historic Structures	10:30 am	Housing
4 pm	AIA Charrette Results	Noon	Retail 101 Workshop
7 pm	Public Kickoff Workshop	1 pm	Parking
		2:30 pm	Mobility
		4 pm	Neighborhood Leaders
		5:15 pm	Daily Project Update & Design Pin-Up
Wednesday		Thursday	
9 am	Streetscape Design & Gateways	9 am-noon	Open Session
10:30 am	Parks, Greenways & Public Space	1-5 pm	Open Session
1 pm	Open Session	5:15 pm	Daily Project Update & Design Pin-Up
2:30 pm	Redevelopment Tools		
5:15 pm	Daily Project Update & Design Pin-Up		



▲ *Charrette schedule*

► *Design team presenting national best practices*



## 4.4 Public Design Charrette

The public design charrette took place April 25 through April 28 at Town Hall. The design team set up a working studio in the ground floor meeting room. The premise of a charrette is to create a collaborative environment in which all of the experts, decision makers and local citizens can interact, develop a vision for the future and watch that vision come to life through graphic exhibits and policy statements.

The charrette was well attended with focus group meetings set up throughout the day. A schedule of those meetings is found on the previous page. While some members of the team met with various interest groups, the remainder explored the study area in depth and sketched ideas for improvements. Each afternoon included a project update and design pin-up session in which all ideas were taped to the wall for explanation and to generate feedback from participants. The team comes in with no preconceived notion of what the solutions may be and focus on crafting a vision guided by public input. The constant feedback loop that is created throughout the week brings the benefit of public buy-in and political will to make the recommendations a reality.

On the first evening of the week, a public kickoff workshop was held to provide not only an opportunity for input but also educate participants in national trends and best practices from great downtowns around the country. Breakout mapping sessions in small groups gave even more opportunity for the team to listen to individual perspectives and issues. Summaries of the thoughts gathered are found on the following pages in wordle format. Wordles are simplified graphics that compile all of the thoughts related to a posed question and allow the words that are heard most often to stand out in a larger font. The larger the word, the more often it was recorded as the answer (pages 54–57).



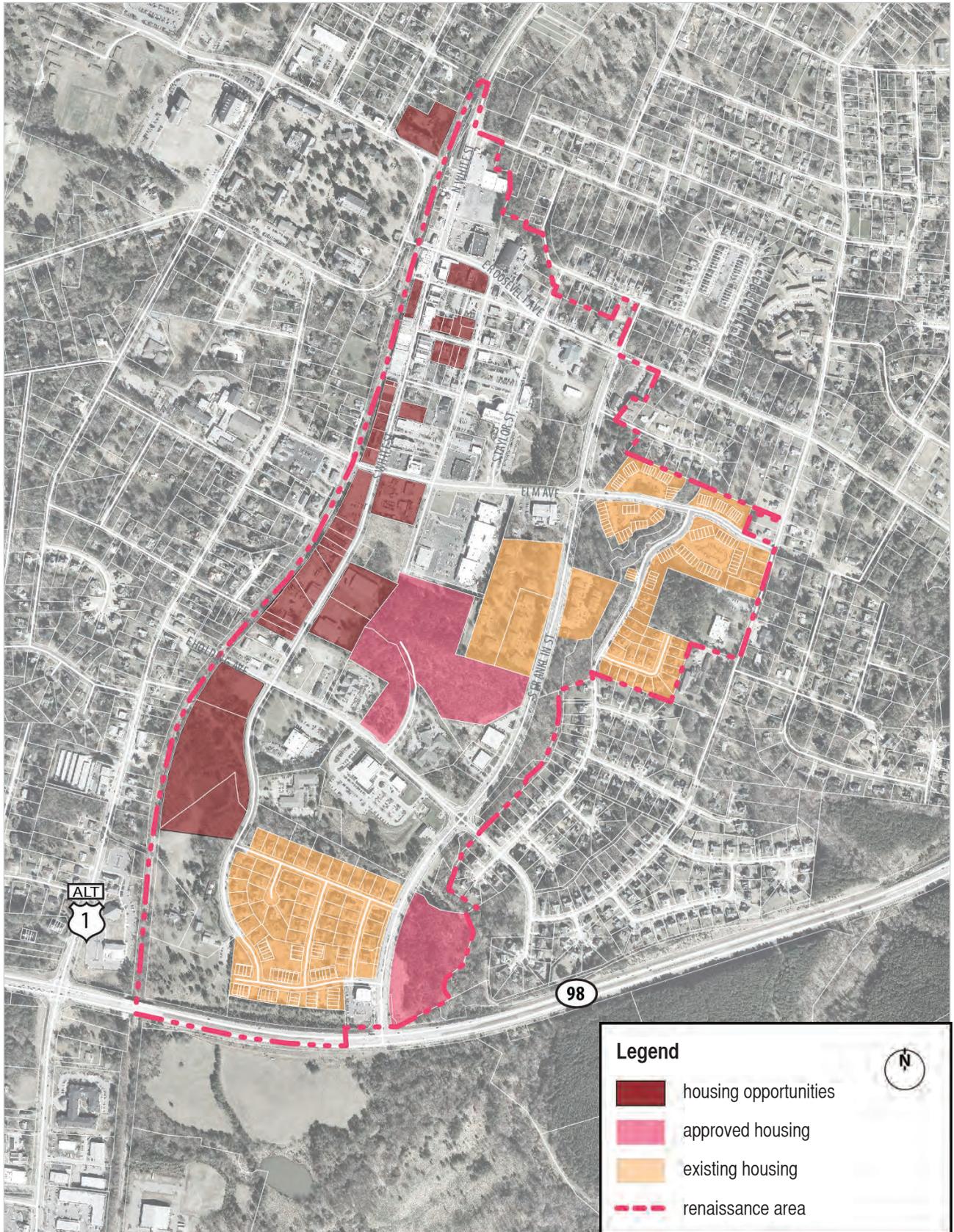
▲ Participants reviewing work during a daily pin-up session



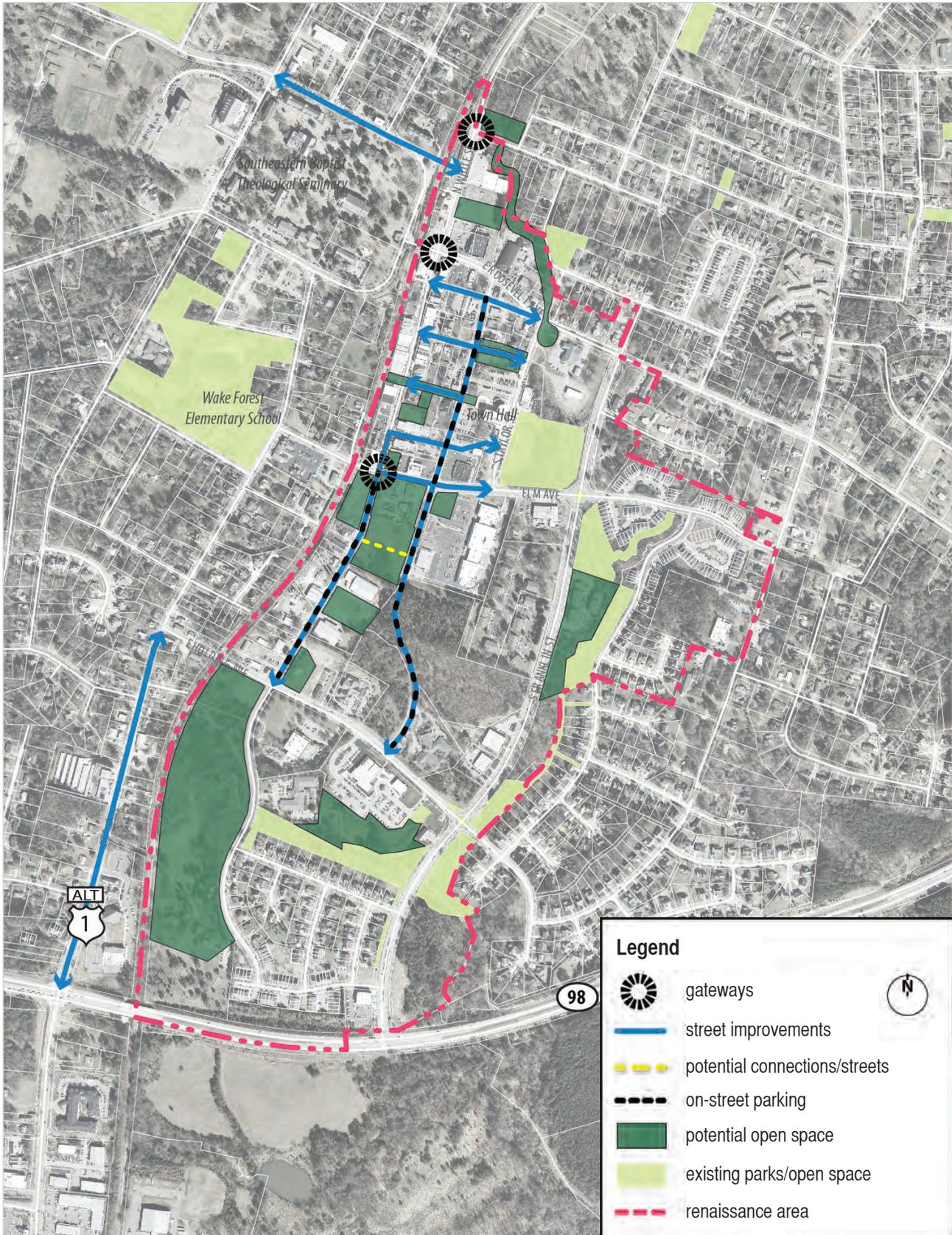
▲ Design team drawing options for the master plan during the charrette



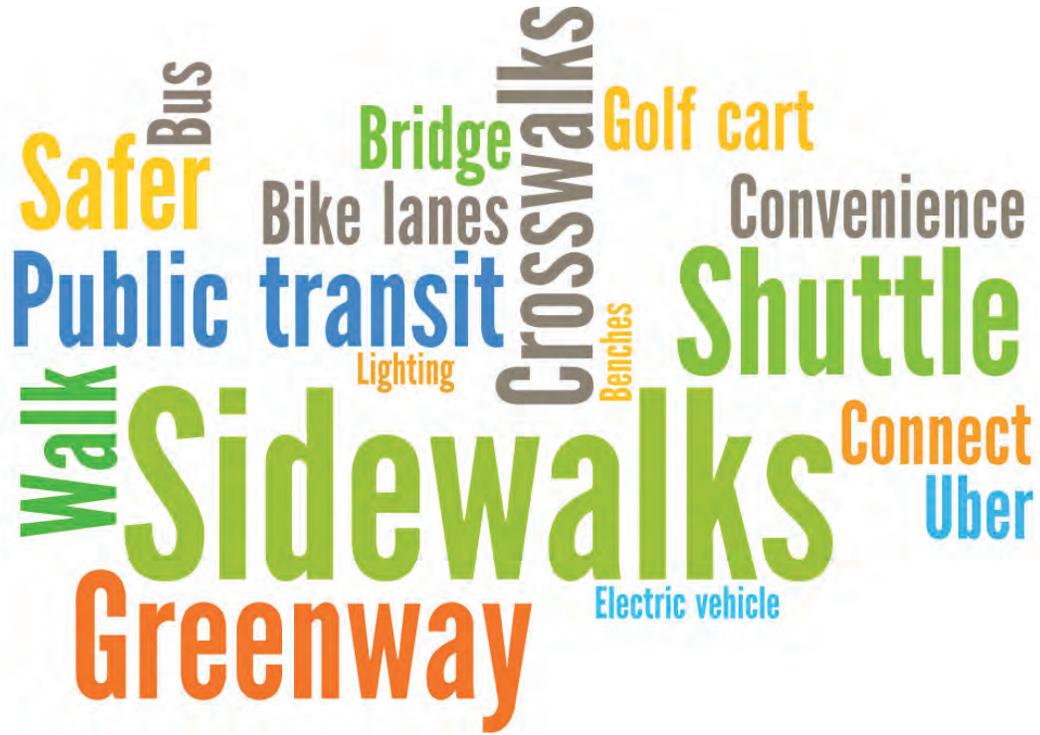
▲ A summary map of public input | Favorite Places: This diagram summarizes responses collected during public engagement sessions when participants were asked to identify their favorite places in downtown. The larger the star, the more responses were counted for a given place. (The red dashed line represents the Renaissance Area boundary)



▲ A summary map of public input | Locations for New Housing Opportunities: This diagram summarizes responses collected during public engagement sessions when participants were asked to identify locations for new housing in downtown.



▲ A summary map of public input | Mobility & Green Infrastructure: This diagram summarizes responses collected during public engagement sessions when participants were asked to identify locations for mobility enhancements and opportunities for new green infrastructure.



*What would make you come to downtown without a car?*



*What do you love about downtown Wake Forest?*







What would make you stay longer in downtown Wake Forest?

*“There is no logic that can be superimposed on the city;  
people make it, and it is to them,  
not buildings, that we must fit our plans.”*

— JANE JACOBS



*Products displayed inside the Cotton Company on White Street*

# 5 Retail Strategies



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Understand the trade area*
- Complement and generate cross-traffic*
- Capitalize on near-term retail potential*
- Tell a compelling story*

# 5 Retail Strategies



## 5.1 Market Considerations

Consumers and retailers typically do not pay much attention to the boundaries drawn by political jurisdictions. Many do not seem fully aware of what falls within the Town of Wake Forest versus the City of Raleigh or unincorporated Wake County, and so on. Thus, the effective “trade area” or “catchment area” for downtown Wake Forest as a retail location depends to a far greater degree on visibility and access (correctly understood) as well as nearby competition.

Based on conventional understandings of visibility and access, downtown Wake Forest is lacking both. It is not located along nor is it in close proximity to a freeway like I-540 or a major arterial road such as Capital Boulevard/US 1. Additionally, is it not easy for metro-wide residents or out-of-town visitors to find, with little high-quality directional signage provided for those who are not already driving or walking in its immediate vicinity. Allegedly, some of the town’s own residents still do not even know that Downtown exists.

### 5.1.1 Parking in Downtown

Downtown Wake Forest is perceived as challenged on parking, as consumers in the Raleigh–Durham metro, especially Baby Boomers and Gen X’ers, have been conditioned to expect the kinds of visible, in-front spaces that are typically in short supply in such settings. For certain “in-and-out” conveniences, this might indeed be an issue. However, the popularity and success of White Street Brewing and Over The Falls

(in its previous location) suggests that the predominance of “in-front” convenient parking spaces is in no way a necessity for the business district as a whole.

Even for those who know where it is and how to get there, downtown Wake Forest cannot offer the same level of convenience as the afore mentioned corridors. Convenience is a critical factor for most consumers, especially for those in northern Wake County, who typically lead busy and harried lives, with long commutes and young children.

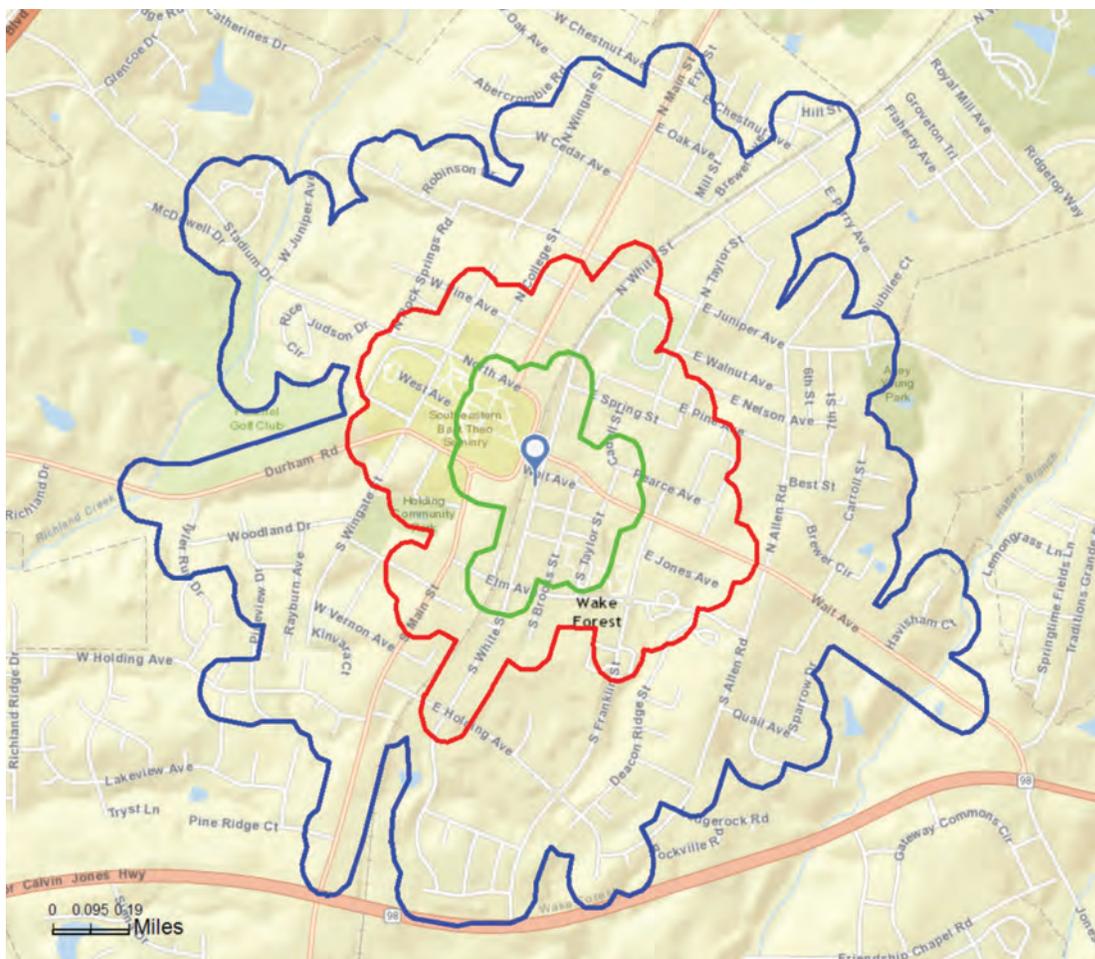
As a result, Capital Boulevard/US 1 exerts a very strong gravitational pull to these consumers, with big-box draws like Wal-Mart Supercenter, SuperTarget and now, Sam’s Club, as well as power centers such as Wake Forest Crossing (at Stadium Drive). Meanwhile, secondary locations along South Main Street/US 1A and Rogers Road have managed to attract market-disruptive grocers like Aldi, Publix and now, Lidl.

These corridors appeal not only to large national and regional chains, but smaller independents and “niche” concepts can be intrigued by, afford the rents and ultimately opt for second-tier centers such as The Factory (South Main Street and Rogers Road), the Market of Wake Forest (Capital Boulevard and Durham Road) and Wakefield Commons (Capital Boulevard and Falls of Neuse Road).

At first blush, downtown Wake Forest's trade area would seem to encompass just a small fraction of the Town's overall footprint, only incorporating, the Downtown itself and the neighborhoods that immediately surround it. While it might boast higher population density and soon be welcoming new townhome and apartment developments, this catchment will likely still fall short of the threshold needed to effect meaningful change to the retail mix.

For example, just 2,400 people live within a ten-minute, roughly half-mile walk of downtown Wake Forest (corresponding to the red polygon in the map below), and only 5,900 within a twenty-minute,

approximately mile-long walk (blue polygon). Assuming that it can capture 15% of the latter's \$64.3 million in annual retail expenditures, downtown Wake Forest would be capable of sustaining a total of 46,000 square feet of retail space (versus the 239,000 square feet already in place, some of which is not occupied). This is not to underestimate the value of new higher-density residential development in and around downtown Wake Forest. Such projects will likely beget a more frequent and reliable customer base for Downtown. But, even with such growth, downtown Wake Forest retail will still need to draw from well beyond the immediate vicinity, as a larger "destination," if it is to support the current



▲ Polygons responding to a five (green), ten (red) and twenty-minute (blue) walk from White Street Brewing in downtown Wake Forest Source: ENCI, MJB Consulting

retail mix more effectively — certainly if it desires to expand and elevate its retail mix beyond what exists at present, which would be highly advantageous for the future success of the Town.

Fortunately, the unrelenting sprawl of northern Wake County and the absence of other walkable business districts points to a real opportunity for downtown Wake Forest to differentiate itself from the aforementioned competition and thereby tap a far wider trade area. It could appeal to the large number of working parents in this corner of the metro by positioning itself as a small-town antidote to their busy and harried lifestyles.

Downtown Wake Forest already starts from a position of strength in this regard. It presents a historic and architecturally coherent “Main Street” (South White Street) with a hardware store, book store, coffee shop, community-minded bank, “Second Friday” event, to name a few. It has been blessed with a collection of outstanding merchants, who have masterfully negotiated the demographic transition of the last fifteen years and modified their offerings to draw newer arrivals.

More to the point, a growing number of its businesses have managed to establish destination appeal, drawing from well beyond the town’s borders. Examples include White Street Brewing, Over The

Falls and the Olde English Tea Room. These kinds of unique “one-off” concepts can theoretically pull from further afield than the large national and regional chains along Capital Boulevard/US 1 that have opened multiple locations across the metro.

If we understand downtown Wake Forest, as the destination downtown for an otherwise sprawling and center-less catchment area, the nature of the “competition” and the drawing of the trade area changes. We no longer account for conventional shopping centers like Wake Forest Crossing or Triangle Town Center, but focus instead on historic Main Street business districts or, in lieu thereof, on manufactured ones such as Triangle Commons, Lafayette Village and North Hills.

### 5.1.2 What is the Relevant Competition?

The manufactured districts referenced above compete with downtown Wake Forest inasmuch as they are designed as open-air, walkable environments. However, Triangle Town Center’s “Commons” addition has struggled with vacancy and foot traffic, and in the best of circumstances, would likely emphasize large national brands. The mix at North Hills also skews more toward chains as well as higher-end shops. Of the three, Lafayette Village, with its sharper focus on unique boutiques, would be Downtown’s most direct rival, though it is relatively modest in size, with, for

- *The large number of families with children in the Main Street trade area, combined with the growing contingent of undergraduates at SEBTS, represent possible sub-markets for a more contemporary “diner” concept with some sort of unique twist that differentiates it from Waffle House and gives it a destination appeal.*

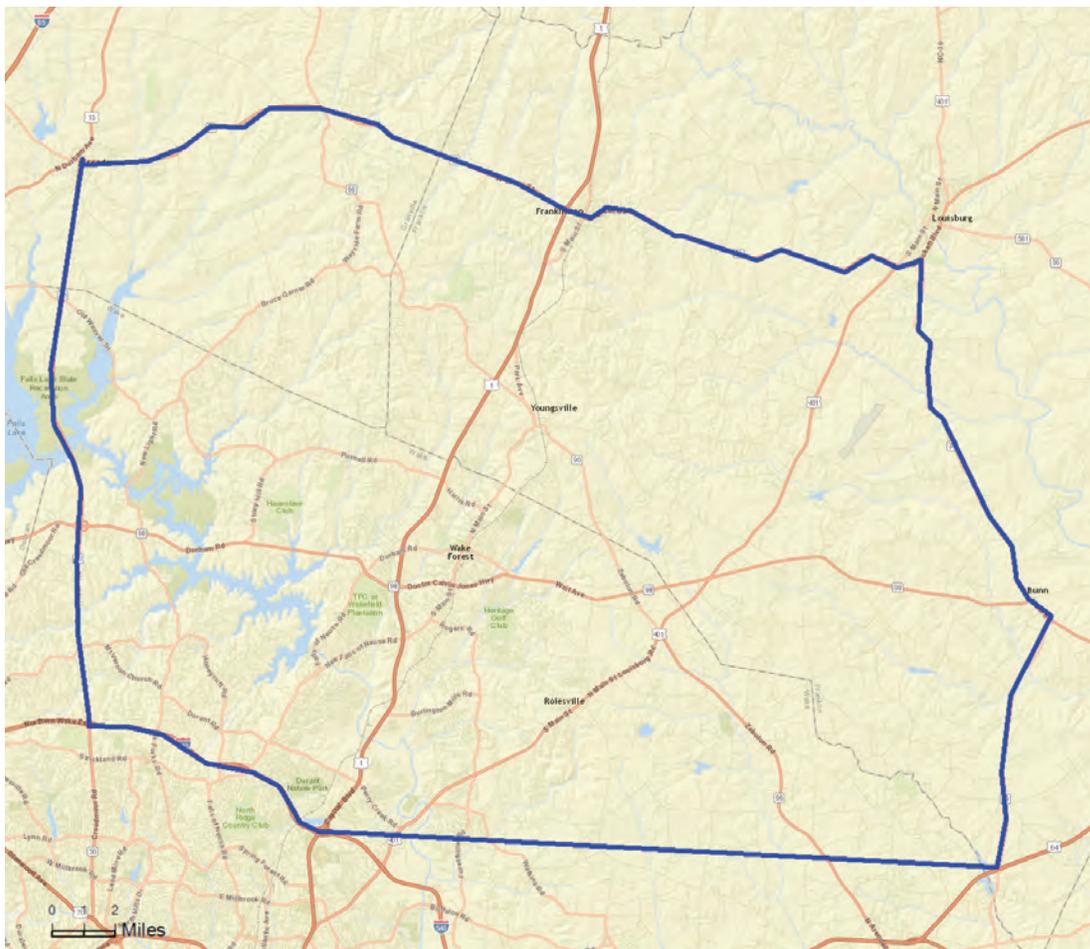


example, just three clothing retailers. Such rivals could materialize in the future, but none would likely be able to compete with the authenticity, history and character of downtown Wake Forest. Additionally, the urban form including and surrounding downtown, creates a certain sense of place that is nearly impossible to replicate in entirely new construction.

Seeing downtown Wake Forest through this lens of “Main Street” positioning would imply a trade area bounded by NC 56 to the north, NC 39 to the east, I-540 to the south

and NC 50 to the west (see image above). This trade area encompasses a number of other exurban communities that lack a legitimate center (or, in the case of Zebulon, a center at the same evolutionary stage as and able to realistically compete with Wake Forest’s).

The table above shows the basic demographic characteristics of this “Main Street” trade area, as compared to the Raleigh MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) as a whole.



▲ Polygon corresponding to the “Main Street” trade area for downtown Wake Forest | Source: ENCI, MJB Consulting

	“Main Street” trade area	Raleigh MSA
2000 Population	89,546	797,048
2010 Population	159,566	1,130,490
2016 Population (Estimated)	183,928	1,275,121
2020 Population (Projected)	206,691	1,415,954
Annualized Population Growth, 2000 to 2010	+7.8%	+4.2%
Annualized Population Growth, 2010 to 2016	+2.5%	+2.1%
Annualized Population Growth, 2016 to 2020	+3.1%	+2.8%
% “Rural” Population	31.6%	17.2%
Median Age	37.9	35.9
Aged 18 to 34 (“Millennials”)	18.2%	23.6%
Households With Kids	43.5%	37.2%
Average Household Size	2.78	2.60
Households With 3 or More People	47.9%	42.1%
% White	74.2%	65.6%
% Asian	3.3%	5.5%
% Black	16.7%	20.3%
% Hispanic	7.0%	10.7%
% B.A. Degree or Higher	44.1%	44.1%
% Graduate or Professional Degree	14.5%	15.7%
% Management/Financial/Business/Professional Jobs	47.7%	46.5%
% Blue Collar Jobs	15.0%	14.6%
% Unemployed	5.3%	5.8%
Median Household Income	\$74,313	\$63,910
% Household Income \$75K or More	49.6%	44.0%
% Households Owner-Occupied	78.9%	66.8%
% Households Owner-Occupied, With Mortgage/Loan	66.1%	54.4%
Median Home Value	\$255,570	\$227,592
% Homes Valued \$300K or More	39.3%	32.3%

▲ *Basic demographic characteristics of the “Main Street” trade area for downtown Wake Forest | Source: ENCI, MJB Consulting*

The following summarizes some of the most noteworthy data points, for the purposes of this analysis:

**The Main Street trade area’s 2016 population is approximately 184,000.**

This population is roughly similar to or considerably larger than the following MSA’s of Jacksonville, NC (186,311); Blacksburg–Christianburg–Radford, VA (181,747); Greenville, NC (175,842); Burlington, NC (158,276); Rocky Mount, NC (148,069); and New Bern, NC (126,245).

**31.6% of the trade area’s population is still considered “rural”,** yet that percentage should continue to decline in the coming

years as more land is developed for housing. The number of residents is projected to rise at an annualized rate of 3.1% between 2016 and 2020, outpacing the Raleigh MSA as a whole (2.8%) and yielding a 2020 population of roughly 207,000.

**The trade area is considerably less diverse than the overall region,**

with whites accounting for 74% of the population (versus 66% for the MSA). Yet even though African Americans constitute just 17%, that still translates to roughly 31,000 people. Furthermore, the percentages of Asians, Latinos and African Americans are expected to grow modestly in the next five years.

**The trade area is oriented towards families and empty-nesters to a greater degree than the MSA as a whole,**

with 44% of its households containing one or more children (versus 37%) and with above-average percentages in the 45–64 and 5–17 age ranges. The share of “Millennials”, aged 18 to 34, is noticeably lower, at 18% (versus 24%).

**The median household income of \$74,000 is significantly higher than the MSA’s (\$64,000),** with some 33,000 households earning \$75,000 or more and 11,000 making \$150,000 or more. Real discretionary income, however, is impacted by the prevalence of young families, which not only have mouths to feed but also, with 66% of trade area households, mortgages to pay (versus 54%).

Another layer of market analysis is “psychographics”, which divides the U.S. population into “segments” based on qualitative characteristics such as lifestyles, sensibilities and aspirations. The three largest in the trade area, according to ENCI’s Tapestry Segmentation scheme, are Soccer Moms (representing 23% of the households), Up and Coming Families (15%) and Middleburg (14%). Each of these will be introduced in turn, and refined later in accordance with the consultant’s own framework and observations.

### *Soccer Moms*

*Median Household Income = \$84,000*  
*Median Net Worth = \$252,000*

These are households that prefer new single-family housing on the suburban periphery, away from the bustle of the urban core, yet within the commuter shed. They consist of two working parents, busy and time-harried owing to their lengthy commutes as well as their growing children. They typically carry high levels of debt, with multiple home

mortgages and auto loans. As consumers, they value convenience and while they spend less on apparel than the national average, they will buy for their kids, with purchases of apparel and toys.

### *Up & Coming Families*

*Median Household Income = \$64,000*  
*Median Net Worth = \$96,000*

These households also gravitate to new subdivisions on the suburban periphery, largely for the affordability. They, too, consist of two working parents, with hectic lifestyles due to their commutes and kids, but in comparison to Soccer Moms, they are younger and at an earlier life stage, and they carry additional forms of debt, such as student loans and credit cards. For these reasons, they tend to be price-sensitive shoppers, also spending below the national average on apparel. Finally, they are far more ethnically diverse, representing the upward mobility of today’s Hispanic and African American populations.

### *Middleburg*

*Median Household Income = \$55,000*  
*Median Net Worth = \$89,000*

These households represent “old line” Wake Forest, the ones that are not necessarily connected to the growth of the larger region but that have now been surrounded by it. They consist of young couples, many with children, who live in older or mobile homes. Their sensibilities tend to be more conservative, with a focus on family, faith and country. They are thrifty shoppers, most willing to part with their money for children’s apparel and toys, family restaurants and home improvement projects, and they prefer to buy American. They also like to bowl.

While many of its students are already accounted for in the above discussion as trade area residents, the demand generated by the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) campus also warrants special mention. The enrollment today stands at roughly 3,500, and the Administration wants for that number to grow eventually to 4,500, including online students. Of the 3,500, approximately 1,000 live in the three dorms on the campus itself.

SEBTS is often discounted as a source of retail demand for downtown Wake Forest because its students are not thought to have much discretionary income. The roughly 2,800 enrollees at the graduate level are typically married with kids and having to support their families with part-time jobs. As consumers, they tend to fixate on price and value.

The undergraduate division, however, is a bit closer to a traditional liberal arts college. The average age of its 550 students is just 23, 40% are female and 80% are still single. Almost all of them live in on-campus dorms. And many hail from middle-class or affluent families and can count on parental support. Furthermore, the Administration is hoping that enrollment at this level rises to 1,000 eventually.

Psychographically, many of the seminary's undergraduates appear to fit the profile of the so-called "hipster" more commonly associated with pockets of Downtown

Raleigh — that is, while they might not drink or smoke, they dress in skinny jeans and plaid shirts, have beards and visible tattoos, listen to alternative music, order pour-over coffee at Back Alley Coffee Roasters, and so on.

SEBTS also happens to be the largest employer in downtown Wake Forest and its immediate vicinity, with 380 workers, followed by the Town of Wake Forest, which accounts for 196 jobs — though, many of these are already accounted for as trade area residents. In total, there are approximately 4,600 daytime workers within a one-mile ring, which constitute a critical source of demand for eateries and cafes, especially daytime-oriented ones like Shorty's Famous Hot Dogs and The Lemon Tree.

Finally, the Renaissance Centre for the Arts, a 10,000 square foot event and meeting space located in Renaissance Plaza, has been growing in utilization and visitation ever since opening in 2014. Compared to its 105 events and 5,000 attendees in 2015, there were 83 and 7,200, respectively, in the first five months of 2016, which extrapolates to 199 and 17,300 for the full year (for percentage increases of 90% and 140%).

Before proceeding to a discussion of what all of this means for the positioning and tenancing strategy, it is important to examine what downtown Wake Forest's current retail mix might be saying. After all, the kinds of businesses there are not necessarily a perfect

*“... the absence of other walkable business districts points to a real opportunity for downtown Wake Forest ...”*

reflection of the residential base within the trade area, pointing to possible underserved or emerging sub-markets and latent opportunities.

Generally speaking, the Wake Forest consumer appears to prefer conservative, loose-fitting, comfortable and practical fashions, offered at a value (like one might find at Kohl's or Clarks), with a secondary niche in on-trend yet still relatively safe looks for “dressing up” and “going out” (like those found at an American Eagle Outfitters or LOFT). That said, the offerings at Pink Boutique and Carolina Clover (as well as Lily Mae's, at The Factory) also point to demand for “Southern preppy” clothing and accessories for young mothers. The apparel and gifts at Pink Boutique, Ollie's, Lemon Tree, and The Cotton Company suggest the presence of a shopper who

is interested in merchandise that is more trendy, colorful and fun. Furthermore, the emphasis on “craft” and “artisanal” offerings at Back Alley Coffee Roasters (with coffee), White Street Brewing and The Brooks Street Bowl (with beer) cannot just be attributed to the aforementioned hipster undergrads at SEBTS, but also, if not primarily, to the continued mainstreaming of such values and sensibilities in consumer culture.

Finally, the success of such businesses as B&W Hardware and Brooks Street Bowl in targeting young families with children suggests that this demographic, so prevalent within the Main Street trade area, is in fact patronizing downtown Wake Forest and could possibly be tempted to spend more if the right kinds of retail, restaurant and entertainment concepts materialized to serve them.



▲ Pink Boutique's selection of monogrammed items, brightly colored dresses and rompers, leggings, tunic tank-tops and House of Harlow jewelry reflect its “Southern preppy” vibe and targets trend-conscious moms in their late 20s and 30s.

## 5.2 Retail Positioning & Tenanting Strategy

While the physical form of downtown Wake Forest might suggest its potential as a destination “Main Street”, its appeal will ultimately need to be grounded in more than its small-town charm. A compelling “sense of place” is necessary, but it will not, in this case, be sufficient. In addition, attention will need to be paid to the nuances and complexities of the retail mix.

Specifically, the tenants that fill the storefronts cannot just be any tenants, but ones that complement and can generate cross-traffic for each other, which underscores the importance of adjacencies and clustering. Such considerations are foremost in the minds of shopping-center developers as they plan and lease their projects, they must be for downtowns as well.

With this line of thought, downtown Wake Forest’s existing retail mix becomes the starting point for its positioning and tenanting strategy. That is, what kinds of customers are its most popular businesses (and non-retail uses) already attracting? Are there new concepts or additional lines of merchandise that can increase their expenditures further?

### 5.2.1 Sub-markets

Sub-markets are not only defined in demographic or even psychographic terms, however, but also, by their consumer purpose or “mission”. Shoppers have very different mindsets when they are taking care of daily errands, when they are looking for wardrobe staples, when they are buying big-ticket comparison goods, and when they are enjoying a leisurely Saturday afternoon.

The first shopper is convenience-driven and will tend to buy such goods and services where, put simply, it is easiest and fastest to do so. In an automobile-dominated part of the metro, this implies locations along arterial roads, with free and ample parking — like, for instance, the intersection of Rogers Road and Heritage Lake Road, or of NC 98 Bypass and South Franklin Street (Village Pharmacy). Downtown Wake Forest is not well-suited to cater to this customer.

The second is commodity-driven and wants to spend the afternoon comparison-shopping (for clothing, shoes, accessories), but in an environment and from a range of choices that she already knows. She is not looking for a novel experience or a distinctive setting. So she heads, to the super-regional mall, like Triangle Town Center or Crabtree Valley Mall, where she can find a large and predictable selection of national brands. This is not downtown Wake Forest.

The third is interested in spending a leisurely afternoon (or evening) outside her car and in the open air, enjoying a walkable and “browse-worthy” place. One that she can experience on a number of levels and even in unexpected ways, with options for food, fun, people-watching and unique shops. Perhaps the closest example would be Lafayette Village, though this sort of positioning could also work for downtown Wake Forest, albeit with a slightly different formula.

### 5.2.1 Why Not “Arts & Entertainment”?

The “Arts & Entertainment” identity of the earlier Renaissance Plan might have been ahead of its time in 2003, but it presents as somewhat generic and dated today, lacking

the specificity and resonance required for effective targeting of downtown Wake Forest's primary sub-markets.

This approach is grounded in a fundamental rule of marketing, that it is almost always easier and less costly to capture more expenditure from existing customers than to create new ones from scratch. Rather than trying to jump on the latest fad or to be “all things to all people”, a given business district should endeavor to understand how it can more fully exploit the sub-markets that it already has.

### 5.2.2 A Supermarket in Downtown

In the 2003 Renaissance Plan, the scheme proposed for the “Town Center South District” had included a full-service grocery store. Yet, while such an amenity might have previously existed in downtown Wake Forest, one would be unlikely today, given how little of a customer base remains after the draws of nearby competitors such as Lowes Foods (Gateway Commons, Capital Boulevard), Harris Teeter (Capital Boulevard) and soon, Lidl (South Main

Street/US 1A) are accounted for. Its best chance for grocery retail lies in some sort of well-differentiated “destination” food concept capable of drawing from beyond its immediate catchment, like a market hall with multiple vendors. Such formats, however, carry considerable risk for the operator. Alternately, Dollar General, as will be discussed later, could be expanded into a Dollar General Market, which offers a larger food selection geared towards a lower-income demographic.

### 5.2.3 National Chains in Downtown

The 2003 Renaissance Plan also envisioned a number of “junior anchors and specialty retailers” as part of its ambitious Town Center South District scheme, citing Crate & Barrel, Barnes & Noble, Pier 1 Imports, Williams-Sonoma, Pottery Barn, Abercrombie & Fitch, Ann Taylor and Gap in particular. While it is not inconceivable that these retailers would be intrigued by an opportunity to expand to a high-growth sub-market like northern Wake County, they would be more likely to consider some sort of “lifestyle center” project along Capital



▲ *In order to ensure higher volumes and hedge against over-reliance on any one source of revenue, existing merchants might consider adding new product lines or sub-markets. Page 158 Books, for instance, could conceivably offer textbooks for SEBTS students, now that the on-campus LifeWay Christian Store has closed.*



▲ *Rather than trying to attract new merchants from elsewhere, downtown Wake Forest should first approach ones in downtown Wake Forest who have already developed a local following, like Back Alley Coffee Roasters, to see if they might be interested in expanding with another concept. (Image: [www.backalleyroasters.com](http://www.backalleyroasters.com))*

Boulevard/US 1, ideally near the intersection with I-540, which can offer superior visibility and access.

So what does all of this mean in practice? What specifically would such a formula entail? In terms of atmospherics, the approach would seem to be self-evident. It is an indulgence in nostalgia, “the way Main Street(s) used to be”, but with enough contemporary relevance to attract and retain the attention of today’s consumer — in other words, **resonant as well as relevant**.

Specifically with regards to retail, the formula would involve the following:

- » A diversified mix of retail uses, providing a variety of opportunities for shopping, dining and recreation, so as to generate multiple streams of foot traffic throughout the day/night and extend dwell time.
- » A collection of shops selling comparison goods that align with the mission of the leisured day-tripper. These need not concentrate on a specific type of merchandise, like apparel. Rather, it is more important that they cater to a similar customer.
- » A range of dining options covering different day-parts, moods and tastes, from “buzz-generating” destinations to more utilitarian eateries that simply fill gaps in the marketplace.
- » An emphasis on “differentiation”, including not just one-off independents but also, new concepts from successful local merchants as well as small regional chain-lets that do not yet have a presence in the Main Street trade area.
- » A flexibility with unconventional retail formats, to lower barriers-to-entry for entrepreneurs and allow for concept innovation, while also adding a contemporary edge and energy to the street life.



▲ *Backfins Crabhouse is an example of a dining concept that, due to the broad appeal of seafood cuisine, attracts an ethnically diverse customer base.*



▲ *Moon & Lola, an Apex-based regional chain-let with five company-owned stores, sells products that would appeal to the customers already patronizing Pink Boutique and Ollie's. (Image: Facebook.com/MoonandLola)*

With a number of existing draws and outstanding merchants, the tenant mix in downtown Wake Forest already reflects these attributes to a certain extent; it simply needs to add more: one or two new restaurants that draw long lines and citywide media attention; a few more boutiques to browse; a couple more magnets for students; and further experimentation with mobile retailing.

There is an underlying tension in all of this, though. Downtown Wake Forest is still a fledgling sub-market, and while the population in its trade area might be significant (and growing), its “capture rate” — that is, the percentage of total resident expenditures that it attracts — will likely be low. Furthermore, the value orientation of its primary sub-markets will place limits on pricing and thus, profit margin.

While the positioning outlined above moves in the direction of specialization, both of these factors will work to pull merchants back towards the middle, away from small niches and towards concepts with broad appeal, which can generate the higher volumes necessary to compensate for the lower capture and margin. The successful businesses will be the ones that find just the right balance.

This also implies concepts that can draw from across ethnic lines, given that non-whites constitute more than a quarter of the Main Street trade area and African-Americans, nearly 17%, and that Up and Coming Families represents its second-largest psychographic segment. Generally speaking, such cross-over is most common with food and restaurants.



- ▲ *The considerable number of residents in the Main Street trade area who were teenagers during the golden age of arcade games in the late '70s and '80s offer a ready market for a modern “barcade” concept, just one example of how evening entertainment in downtown Wake Forest might be diversified. Charlotte’s Abari Game Bar is an example. (Image: abarigamebar Instagram)*

## 5.3 Locational/Development Strategy

One of the challenges facing new retail and mixed-use development in downtown Wake Forest today is that the kinds of tenants which would be most realistic at this point in its evolution (and which have been recommended in the positioning strategy) tend not to be so well-capitalized or creditworthy. This could have implications on the pro formas and financing of new projects. The obstacles are even greater in the case of the restaurateur, who would also need a new kitchen and most likely have to rely on the developer to pay most, if not all, of the upfront cost of building one, thus increasing the perceived risk and complicating the development economics.

The same holds for the rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings. While their seeming inaction has engendered quite a bit of frustration among local stakeholders, the owners of such properties should not necessarily be expected to spend the money on (often expensive) historic renovations unless and until such reinvestment can generate returns that “make the numbers pencil”.

Based on a review of listings on [www.cityfeet.com](http://www.cityfeet.com), rent plus pass-throughs for roughly comparable space across Wake Forest is currently in the range of \$13–17 per square foot. The kinds of tenants recommended as part of the positioning strategy are in most cases not going to be capable of grossing above \$150 per square foot (for shops) and \$250 per square foot (for restaurants). This means that their occupancy costs should be no higher than the mid-teens.

In order for projects in downtown Wake Forest to move forward, the retail rents on the ground floor, combined with the returns on the non-retail uses upstairs, will need to cover all of the costs involved in new construction or rehabilitation (such as land acquisition/assemblage, historic renovation, build-out assistance). Once in operation, they must also provide a profit margin that meets the property owner’s goals and expectations.

So, it is possible that existing businesses may not be able to afford to rent commercial space in new construction projects that will eventually be developed. But, it is imperative that every effort be made to place local, authentic businesses into new development as it emerges. There will be plenty of out-of-town chains that can pay more rent and will want to locate in Wake Forest. But, local businesses have established and will continue to reinforce a strong, unique sense of place for downtown Wake Forest that is highly desirable and will differentiate it from competitors.

The following discusses the three different “areas” of downtown Wake Forest — southern (from East Holding Avenue to Elm Avenue), central (from Elm Avenue to Wait Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue) and northern (from East Roosevelt Avenue to East Spring Street) and establishes priorities for the Town’s limited energies and resources on the basis of where the greatest near-term retail potential seems to lie.



### 5.3.1 Southern Area

The near-term retail opportunity is greatest in downtown Wake Forest's southern area. Given the expanded and new concepts planned for the Renaissance Plaza shopping center, the momentum to be generated by a reconnected Brooks Street and the new Retreat at Renaissance townhouse project as well as the advantage of superior connectivity to NC 98 Bypass and South Main Street/US 1A, there is much potential for several vacant or underutilized parcels in this area.

From a retail standpoint, the most important sites are the ones currently occupied by DAB International and Suntrust Bank. If these sites were redeveloped to include storefronts along their Elm Avenue elevations, they could help to reestablish some level of pedestrian connectivity between what are now two separate and competing center(s)-of-gravity.

#### *Emerging "Intra-Downtown" Competition*

At present, downtown Wake Forest is defined by two separate centers-of-gravity: one along South White Street roughly between The Cotton Company and Roosevelt Avenue and the other at the Renaissance Plaza strip mall. These two centers seem to compete with each other for

activity, consumers and tenants rather than participating in a symbiotic relationship. In certain respects, this is a competition that the latter appears well-positioned to win, given its plentiful parking and aggressive owners. For this reason, establishing a pedestrian connection between the two becomes vitally important, as a means of increasing cross-traffic and ensuring that the historic core does not become something of an afterthought.

Ultimately the goal for future growth is to extend the core southward towards East Holding Avenue, with its civic and community uses. Of the two north-south corridors that extend in that direction, Brooks Street, will likely become the more promising for retail, due to the more direct connection to South Franklin Street and the NC 98 Bypass as well as the planned greenway (via the "Downtown Connector"). South White Street, on the other hand, effectively dead-ends in Heath Ridge Village.

*New housing units are under construction now and Renaissance Plaza will soon have hundreds of new customers within a 10 minute walk.*



▲ Southern Area of Renaissance Area Master Plan

### 5.3.2 Central Area

While it has long served as Wake Forest's Main Street, the historic core of South White Street took an important step forward with the opening of White Street Brewing in 2012. The buzz that it has generated since, combined with the town's exponential rate of population growth, has helped to raise Wake Forest's profile more broadly and put it on the radar screens of a wider range of prospective tenants. When they arrive in downtown, they find an enviable collection of sophisticated merchants, including B&W Hardware (in existence since 1949), Wake Forest Coffee Company (opened 2008), Pink Boutique (2014), Page 158 Books (2015) and Back Alley Coffee Roasters (2015), among others.

As a result, there is no shortage of tenant demand for ground-floor retail space on South White Street. The problem is one of available inventory, with the tight supply resulting in asking rents that have reached as high as \$32 per square foot. This rate is simply not sustainable for most of the businesses likely to be interested in today's downtown Wake Forest.

Some spaces should become available in the coming years as longtime merchants choose to retire. Other spaces are currently occupied by office uses, a number of them concentrated to the south of The Cotton Company, along a stretch that is particularly important to the aforementioned goal of strengthening the pedestrian connection with Renaissance Plaza.

There are also properties that require significant investment, either in the rehabilitation of existing buildings (e.g. "Birkenstocks Building" at East Jones Avenue; "Victorian Square" at Roosevelt Avenue) or the development of new ones (e.g. the vacant lot across White Street from The Cotton Company). These locations would undoubtedly command interest from prospective tenants. However, their respective property owners have thus far been unwilling and/or unable to proceed with specific plans for upfit, rehab or new development. Other than perhaps helping to identify a possible buyer or development partner, attention should be focused elsewhere until evidence of interest and/or capacity to move forward is apparent.

Meanwhile, while new development along the proposed "festival street", East Owen Avenue, is a possibility and ground-floor retail space would be encouraged there in order to further activate the public realm, the rental rates that would be needed to support new construction could be prohibitive for local small businesses. That remains to be seen, but if local entrepreneurs and authentic retailers are important to the people of Wake Forest, then the Town, stakeholders and property owners should be thinking of ways to help small businesses find a way to occupy space in new construction as it develops.



▲ Central Area of Renaissance Area Master Plan

### 5.3.3 Northern Area

The retail potential along North White Street and Roosevelt Avenue remains somewhat questionable at this time, as Roosevelt presents a psychological barrier of sorts, partly due to the public realm, but also, to the ailing condition of many properties along the corridor and in the adjoining neighborhood. Wait Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue no longer holds the same appeal to a potential retailer as it did before the construction of NC 98 Bypass, when it was still the primary east-west route through town and carried considerably more traffic. Rather than a gateway into downtown, it now functions mostly as a connector to the adjacent neighborhoods.

However, several recommendations on how to improve this Northern Area have been brought forward in this document. But, there is a chance that a catalytic and dynamic project could have the unintended effect of spreading the energy too thin in the whole of downtown. Generally speaking, the performance and impact of a retail mix is directly proportional to its compactness, which enables individual businesses to take advantage of cross-traffic and synergy. Having said that, the pace at which the area is growing could bring new consumers into downtown that would create a demand for new development.

Commercial potential for the properties to the north of Wait Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue, in the near term, lies more in the creative and inexpensive use of space. Makers, artists, chefs and other creative entrepreneurs looking to start-up add so much life and vibrancy to any community, but struggle being able to afford space to lease. This area

could become the new “creative industrial” district, which would likely add a “cool factor” and support the unique sense of place that already exists in Wake Forest.

With these factors in mind, and given the escalating value of underutilized land in the southern area, it would be worth exploring the possibility of relocating Dollar General to the strip mall at 150 North White Street. Perhaps it could occupy a larger space capable of accommodating the discount-variety chain’s “Dollar General Market” format, which incorporates an expanded selection of groceries, including fresh produce, and measures roughly 17,000 square feet (versus 7,200 square feet for a traditional Dollar General).

The big unknown that would impact all of downtown is the Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor Project, which could involve the closing of Elm Street to vehicular traffic effectively making the southern area less connected by vehicles. This could make Front Street the undisputed gateway to downtown and elevate the northern area to prominence in the eyes of retailers.



▲ *While not a full-service grocer, the Dollar General Market format would respond to some extent to the desire voiced by residents in the town’s northeast quadrant for such an amenity. (Image: Yelp.com)*



▲ Northern Area of Renaissance Area Master Plan

## 5.4 Retail Implementation Strategy

Many of the retail-related recommendations for physical and design improvements reiterate those proposed elsewhere in this Plan, particularly with regard to wayfinding (both along high-volume regional roads and in downtown Wake Forest's immediate vicinity), pedestrian linkages (through placemaking and new development), activation of retail frontages (through creative signage/façade enhancements as well as outdoor seating and "parklets"), and non-retail drivers of foot traffic (e.g. playgrounds and spraygrounds).

The following recommendations, however, warrant special attention here:

### 5.4.1 Retail Merchandising Units

The previous section discussed how many of the sites earmarked for mixed-use projects in this Plan might not be "ready" for development, as the rents to be generated from retail and other uses do not yet justify the investment. This points to

an important role for what might be called "non-permanent" retailing, which are mobile formats such as carts, kiosks, trucks and shipping containers.

Also known as "Retail Merchandising Units" (or RMUs), these formats serve as an ideal flexible and short-term use for such sites until they can be feasibly redeveloped. In the interim, while available ground-floor space remains scarce, they provide additional inventory as well as opportunities to demonstrate the viability of downtown Wake Forest as a retail location. Compared to permanent storefronts, RMUs also offer a lower-risk approach to testing new concepts, operators and locations, as they can be customized to (and only incur costs for) periods of peak demand, and are easily moved elsewhere if necessary. By reducing barriers-to-entry, they become incubators for early-stage entrepreneurs, facilitating greater variety in the retail mix. Finally, their presence adds a touch of novelty and thereby helps to enliven the street scene.



▲ *Airstream Travel Trailer occupied by a retail use*

On a broader level, it conveys the sense that downtown Wake Forest is in touch with the latest in contemporary urban life and even, a little hip — an important factor in attracting a wide range of demographics to downtown.

Food trucks are the most common sort of RMU in downtown settings, but other models should be considered as well, such as fashion trucks (or “mobile clothing boutiques”). Customers enter and browse the inside, which is typically furnished with changing rooms. Like food trucks, their exteriors are typically “wrapped” in eye-catching colors and graphics. A key advantage of such trucks is that they offer an alternative means of growing the existing “cluster” of comparison-goods boutiques in downtown Wake Forest, thereby enhancing its “browse-worthy” appeal. To this point, the format appears especially popular with the psychographic that already gravitates to shops like Pink Boutique and Carolina Clover.

Another novel type of RMU is the shipping container. Primarily used to carry merchandise on cargo ships, freight trains and 18-wheeler trucks, these 160 square foot units (8 feet x 20 feet) of corrugated metal can also be refurbished to serve as movable retail spaces. Given the sheer novelty of seeing them on the street used

for this purpose, they tend to turn a lot of heads. Shipping containers filled with retail businesses can be aggregated in a “container village”, or alternately, situated side-by-side along the edges of a vacant lot or parking field that fronts on a commercial corridor. This setup can simulate the street wall of active storefronts that, for reasons discussed elsewhere in this Plan, is considered essential to downtown walkability and vibrancy.



▲ *Modular soft goods retail, Toronto, Canada*

**RECOMMENDATION 5A:**  
Use Retail Merchandising Units (RMUs) to provide additional inventory and demonstrate the viability of downtown Wake Forest.



▲ *Container cafe, Detroit, MI*



▲ *Small Box container village, Cleveland, OH*

RMUs would make sense in a number of locations across downtown Wake Forest today, contingent, of course, on securing the buy-in of the respective property owners. These locations include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following:

- ① The northwest corner of the Brooks Street–Elm Avenue intersection
- ② The southwest, southeast and northeast corners of the South White Street–Elm Avenue intersection
- ③ The frontages of office properties with deep setbacks along Brooks Street
- ④ The vacant lot on South White Street
- ⑤ The frontage of the parking lots for Fidelity Bank and the chiropractor's office along East Owen Avenue
- ⑥ The East Roosevelt Avenue edges of the CVS parking lot
- ⑦ The frontage of the Renaissance Centre parking lot
- ⑧ The Chamber of Commerce parking lot



What role should the Town be playing in such an initiative? First, it can work to streamline the permitting and approval process for RMUs. Second, it can help to market the format(s) to the kinds of micro-entrepreneurs likely to be interested in them. Third, it can offer financial assistance to these often under-capitalized businesses, perhaps by drawing on Façade Improvement Grant funding for “Special Projects” or the Futures Fund.

#### 5.4.2 Marketing and Branding

Many municipalities and quasi-public/non-profit entities across North America have chosen to play a direct role in attracting new retailers to specific business districts that they are trying to revitalize and/or reposition. Often this involves an in-house or outsourced “recruiter” who works to identify and pursue tenant prospects on behalf of property owners. A number of them, however, grossly underestimate the level of internal capacity needed to play such a role effectively. The position of recruiter is ideally a full-time one. Retail leasing can be a fast-moving business and opportunities are easily lost if not seized instantly. At the very least, the given staffer must be able to devote at least half of their time to the enterprise.

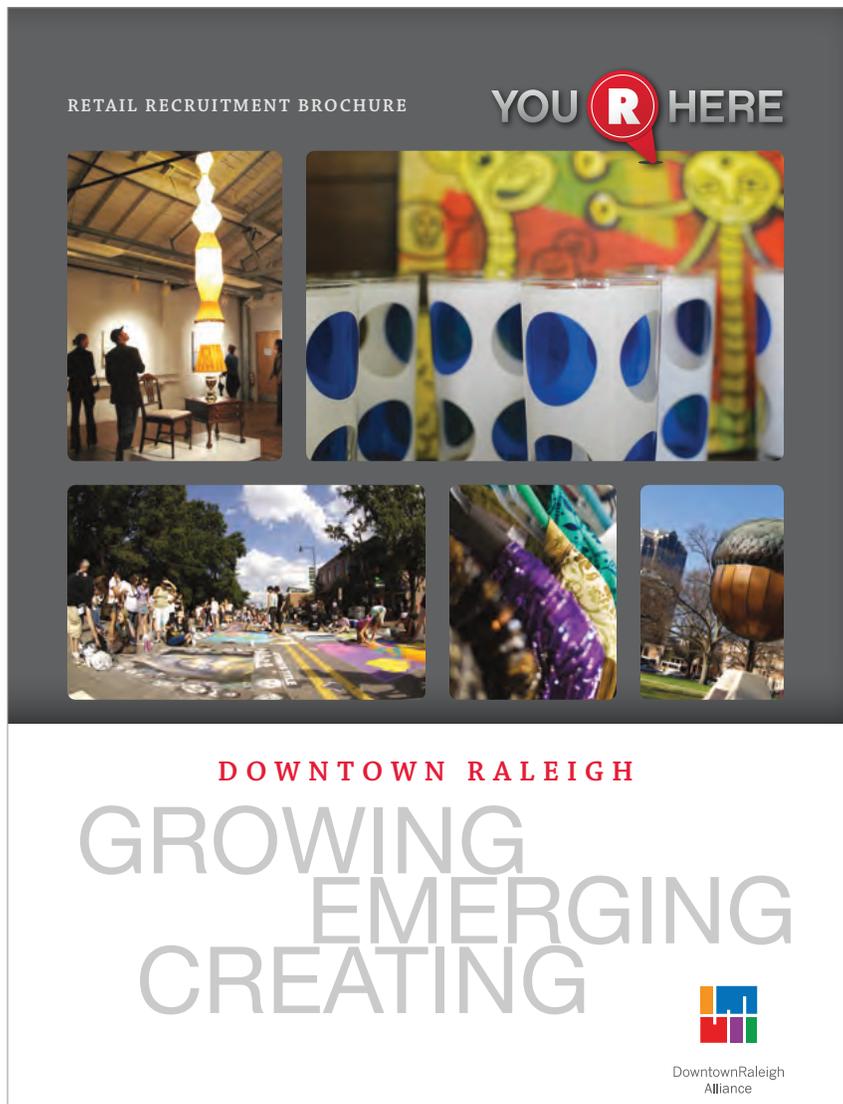
Such an effort also requires coordinated action among relevant stakeholders, with each fully understanding and accepting its specific charge within the larger division of labor. Internal conflict or sloppy execution on this front does not inspire confidence, especially given the industry’s widely-held assumption that the public/non-profit sector does not grasp the realities and imperatives of retail leasing and development. Another common mistake is to rush headlong into recruitment before even assessing whether such a function is even necessary or desired. If a downtown cannot attract new retailers

due to a lack of available inventory, the generation of additional tenant leads is not going to provide a solution. If property owners are not interested in helping, those leads could be lost and the initiative’s credibility tarnished.

For these reasons, the Town of Wake Forest should also consider other ways of supporting downtown retail that consume fewer staff resources and would ultimately be more constructive. With this in mind, it should convene the relevant stakeholders — landlords, brokers and existing merchants — in a consensus-building exercise focused exclusively on how the Town might help.

For example, instead of trying to recruit specific tenants, the Town could focus on marketing downtown Wake Forest more broadly to retail entrepreneurs and investors from across the region who might not be aware of its presence, its vitality and its potential. The goal would be to generate the kind of “buzz” about the opportunity that puts (and keeps) it on the proverbial radar screen.

As part of this initiative, the Town might consider the development of a brochure that pitches downtown Wake Forest as a retail location. Leasing collateral that advertises available space in suburban strips like those along Capital Boulevard/US 1 typically offers the same basic information — demographics within a given radius, traffic counts on adjacent arterials and nearby co-tenancies. A similar element for downtown Wake Forest would have to be fundamentally different, because the “sell” is not necessarily a conventional one. Rather than telling the story that downtown Wake Forest meets all of the standard criteria, this brochure would present a more qualitative case, framing the opportunity in terms of the recommended positioning (i.e. “this is what we are, this is



- ▲ *In Downtown Raleigh, the marketing brochure reframed the retail opportunity in psychographic terms, positioning the district as the epicenter of the city's growing "hipster" and "yupster" subcultures (and thereby diverting attention from its shortcomings as a more conventional retail location).*

#### RECOMMENDATION 5B:

Convene the relevant stakeholders in a consensus-building exercise focused exclusively on how the Town can help facilitate new retail and create buzz about the area.

how we can compete...”) and synthesizing supportive data and case studies in order to tell a compelling story (i.e. “...and this is where we are headed”).

The costs of developing such a brochure would include the staff time, the fees associated with the retail expert who drafts the content, the creative agency that designs the piece and perhaps also a professional photographer who can customize the images, as well as the charges for printing and production. Overall pricing would also depend on the size of the piece, its number of pages as well as any add-ons.

Such a tool is often welcomed by property owners and their brokers, for use as ammunition in the marketing of specific retail spaces. But, in this case it could also be featured as the centerpiece of an initiative to introduce downtown Wake Forest to different kinds of prospective tenants as well as a larger pool of potential buyers and developers. Specifically, it would target the kinds of micro-entrepreneurs that would be most likely to take an interest in the various RMU formats. These are not the sorts of tenants that are normally found at major industry events, like the annual “Deal-making” conventions of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC); they must be reached through other means.

Outreach might involve a concerted effort to raise downtown Wake Forest’s profile in local business and lifestyle publications, like the Triangle Business Journal or Indy Week. However, given the growing distrust of traditional advertising, the heightened visibility would be the result of favorable attention from high-integrity sources, like writers, critics and columnists.

At the same time, the Town should identify, research and contact individuals in the

public, non-profit and/or private sectors who have spearheaded or sponsored successful RMU initiatives elsewhere, so as to gauge their interest in doing the same in downtown Wake Forest or at least to learn from them about the specific steps that would need to be taken.

The Town’s marketing campaign would also hone in on the sorts of investors that take a special interest in and have a successful track record with mixed-use projects in analogous downtown settings. These demand a certain type of experience, expertise and commitment — that is, a different kind of developer (and lender) than the ones that erect (and underwrite) strip malls along major arterials like Capital Boulevard/US 1.

In addition to local business publications, their interest could be piqued by presentations at conferences where they tend to congregate, like the Triangle District Council of the Urban Land Institute or the local/regional events of the ICSC. Also, given the suburban bias of the development community, it might be worth exploring similar channels in other metros besides Raleigh.

Additionally, the existing Wake Forest Downtown Inc. website should not only be modernized in its look and established as the portal for downtown (rather than overlapping with the Town’s website), but its “Business Opportunities” tab should reflect the content developed for and the “pitch” contained within the brochure as well as include a downtown-specific database of available spaces (versus the Town-wide database provided at [www.wakeforesteconomicdevelopment.com](http://www.wakeforesteconomicdevelopment.com)).

### 5.4.3 Target Consumers

The above marketing recommendation is largely focused on generating interest in downtown Wake Forest among tenants and developers, not attracting consumers. The Town, however, should try to become more actively involved in growing the frequency of visitation among one particular (and sizable) subset of consumers, those who live in its newer subdivisions, like Heritage Wake Forest. Downtown Wake Forest would seem to hold much appeal as a local destination for the demographic who typically live in such neighborhoods. Some residents may barely even know of its existence, let alone make time to visit, shop and recreate there on a regular basis.

Offering more reasons for that market segment to visit downtown (the tenant mix, placemaking elements, spraygrounds, RMUs, etc.) is important, but the Town might also want to think even more creatively about how to further penetrate this sub-market and more fully integrate it into the downtown firmament. For example, the Town, in concert with the respective HOA, could coordinate a monthly or quarterly “Downtown Wake Forest Comes To (name of subdivision)” market, as part of a larger, more established event that can ensure foot traffic. It then becomes an intriguing proposition for downtown shops and eateries that could benefit from the incremental sales as well as the marketing boost.

The Plan recommends “active ground-floor uses” as a critical component of a pedestrian-friendly downtown. These uses need to be specified as a matter of policy, along with variations based on the existing character of and realistic aspirations for particular streets or areas.

The central area of South White Street, for example, offers an ever more desirable retail location, yet suffers from a lack of available inventory. Retail — including soft goods, food and beverage — ought to be required on the ground floor. Retail adds activity and vibrancy that other uses do not, given its inherent nature with consumers going in and out frequently. Whereas offices of all kinds — including those with some sort of quasi-retail function, such as bank branches — should be located on the second floor or on side streets, rather than the main street. Existing offices could be grandfathered in to a new ordinance, but once they depart, those spaces would have to shift to the prescribed use.

This stipulation will be especially important towards the southern end of the central area, along South White Street between the Cotton Company and Elm Avenue, where most of the ground-floor spaces are currently occupied by office uses. There is a palpable condition that occurs here and the feel of street activity drops off considerably as you move south past the Cotton Company further discouraging pedestrian movement between the historic core and the Renaissance Plaza strip.

A similar requirement should also apply to the new mixed-use projects envisioned in this Plan for Elm Avenue between Taylor Street and the CSX railroad tracks. Street-level activation will be essential to establishing and reinforcing the pedestrian connection to Renaissance Plaza as well as

**RECOMMENDATION 5C:**  
The Town should try to become more actively involved in growing frequency of visitation among one particular (and sizable) subset of consumers.



▲ *Storefronts with transparency (clear windows and doors)*

creating a pedestrian-friendly environment downtown.

It should be noted and considered in a new ordinance that some atypical retail uses can add activity to the street. Makerspaces, studios and workshops can be very intriguing to those strolling along a main street, but not if the craftsmen are rarely using the space. They must be seen ‘making’ and ‘creating’ through transparent windows along the sidewalk in order to generate the desired activity along the street.

In a similar light, a more flexible approach should be considered on Brooks Street and the adjoining side streets, where the market for retail remains unproven and where requiring such use at street level could result in slower turnover (of existing tenants) or vacant storefronts (in new projects). In these locations, office uses would be permitted as

long as they include some sort of quasi-retail function, like bank branches, tax preparers, insurance brokers, doctors, dentists, law offices and the like. Such quasi-retail office uses should still be compelled to engage the pedestrian and the public realm to the greatest extent possible. Transparent storefront glazing should be mandated and the activity within ought to remain visible from the outside, with both opaque windows and drawn blinds prohibited.

The same holds for the northern area as well, along North White Street and Wait Avenue/Roosevelt Avenue, but with one

#### RECOMMENDATION 5D:

**Use policy to require active ground floor uses based on the existing character and realistic aspirations for particular streets or areas.**

additional stipulation. Street-level units in new developments, even if tenanted with office uses in the near term, must be designed as “flex space(s)” capable of accommodating retail occupancy at a later date. Specifically, each space should front the sidewalk, include its own entrance, extend to a width of roughly 20 feet and a depth of approximately 60 feet and rise to a ceiling height of at least 18 feet. It should be capable of accommodating the venting and exhaust needs of food purveyors. In addition, building services, like power and HVAC, should allow for convenient division and sub-lease to individual tenants.

#### 5.4.5 Parking Strategies

Applying suburban ratios to the 234,000 square feet of retail in downtown Wake Forest translates to a demand for 936 dedicated parking spaces. At present, there are 1,649 spaces across that same footprint of which the overwhelming majority are controlled by private interests. This supply must accommodate other kinds of non-retail uses, like commercial offices.

This is not to suggest the need for another parking facility. Considering the expectations and perceptions of the consumer in evaluating parking supply and demand, it is clear that there is a need to educate visitors on the variety of parking locations that are

available in downtown. This has been taken into account in the positioning strategy introduced earlier, in which downtown Wake Forest competes not as a location for “in-and-out” conveniences but rather, as a more leisurely “browse-worthy” destination.

With the latter positioning, the availability of free, in-front parking spaces is not critical, as long as there are sufficient spaces within a block or so. This only holds, if the town is willing to embrace a market-driven approach to parking, with a focus on making more efficient use of existing resources and conditioning motorists to consider spaces a little further away from their destination if a proximate spot is not available.

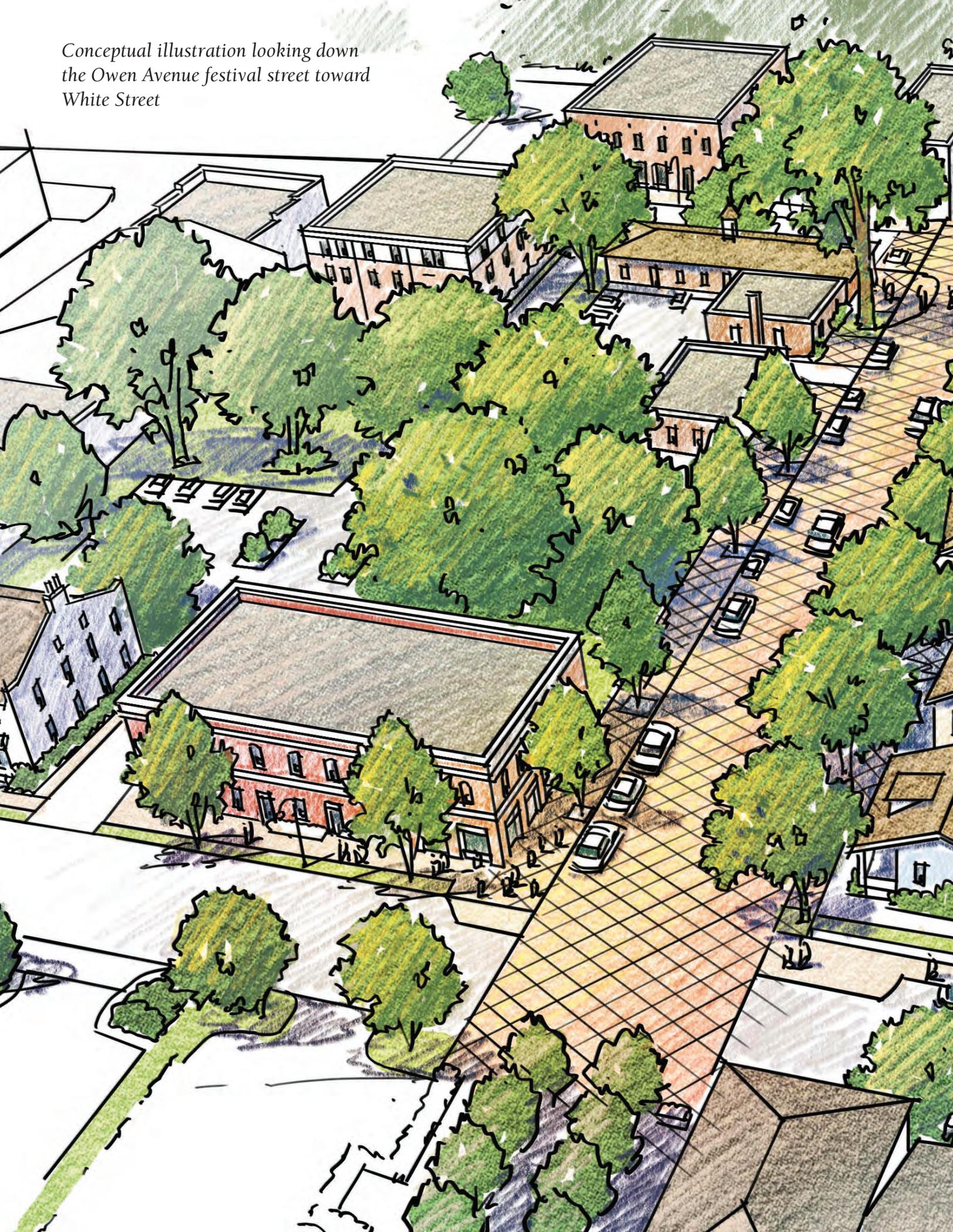
This would imply the introduction of (enforced) metered parking for the on-street stalls and off-street lots along and within a half-block of South White Street, while the spaces further afield (e.g. Brooks Street) remain free and unrestricted. It would also necessitate clear and strategically-located wayfinding signage as well as an educational public-relations campaign.

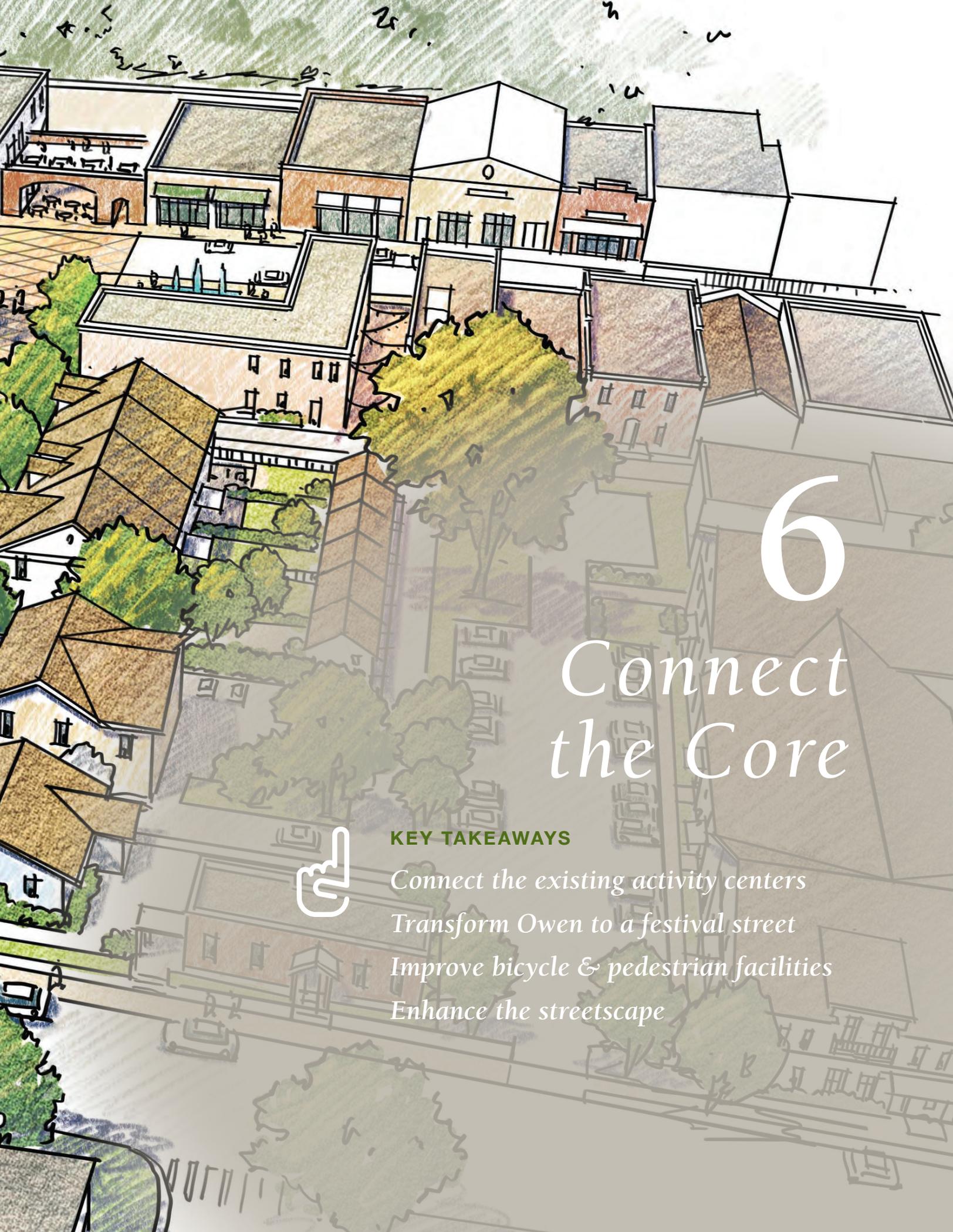


**RECOMMENDATION 5E:**  
Embrace a market-driven approach to parking, with a focus on making more efficient use of existing resources and conditioning motorists to consider spaces a little further away from their destination.

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Conceptual illustration looking down  
the Owen Avenue festival street toward  
White Street





# 6

## Connect the Core

### KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Connect the existing activity centers*
- Transform Owen to a festival street*
- Improve bicycle & pedestrian facilities*
- Enhance the streetscape*

# 6 Connect the Core



## 6.1 Connecting the Centers of Energy

No matter how large or small a place, natural “centers of energy” can always be identified. These are the places where one finds the most activity on a regular basis. Something about these places attracts people to them more than other areas. They are the embers that we can use to begin to spread that energy and activity elsewhere. And, while these individual spots are working,

they certainly have room for growth and improvement.

Downtown Wake Forest has two major centers of energy: the Historic Core along White Street and the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center. They are currently operating independently; we must connect them.



**RECOMMENDATION 6A:**  
 Build on the identified centers of energy and ensure multi-modal connectivity between them.

# CONNECT

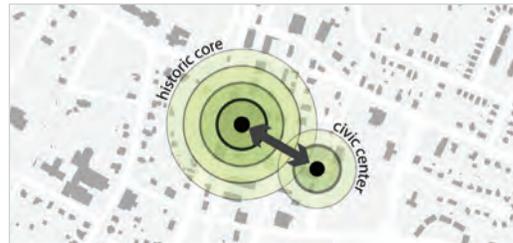
## *Historic Core to Brooks Street Entertainment District*

- » These two centers of activity are only a short walk from one another, but patrons report that they seem miles apart.



## *White Street to Town Hall*

- » Town Hall is the center of civic life and should be well-integrated into the overall activity of downtown.
- » Only one block away, Town Hall feels separated from White Street.



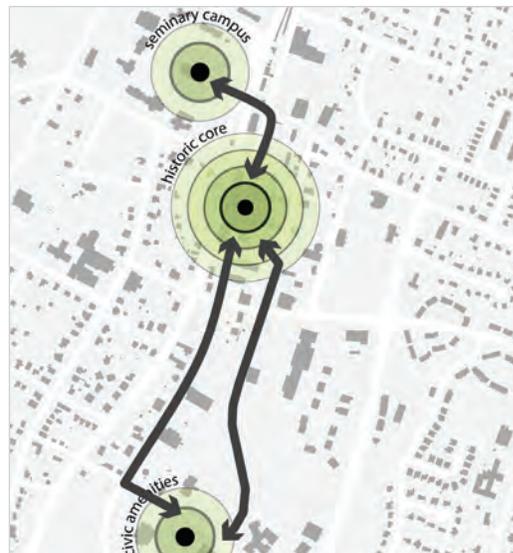
## *Neighborhoods to Historic Core*

- » Many residents live in surrounding urban neighborhoods.
- » They are within a short walk to downtown, but they may not be well-connected with adequate pedestrian facilities.
- » Many of these neighborhood residents asserted that they drive to downtown versus walking or biking.



## *SEBTS Campus, Senior Center and Civic Amenities to Historic Core*

- » Several civic amenities are located here, including the Post Office, the Library and the Senior Center.
- » This area is visually and physically separated from the other points of activity.
- » As pedestrian-friendly development and redevelopment occur between East Holding Avenue and Elm Avenue, this area will connect to the broader walkable downtown core.



## 6.2 Festival Street (Owen Avenue)

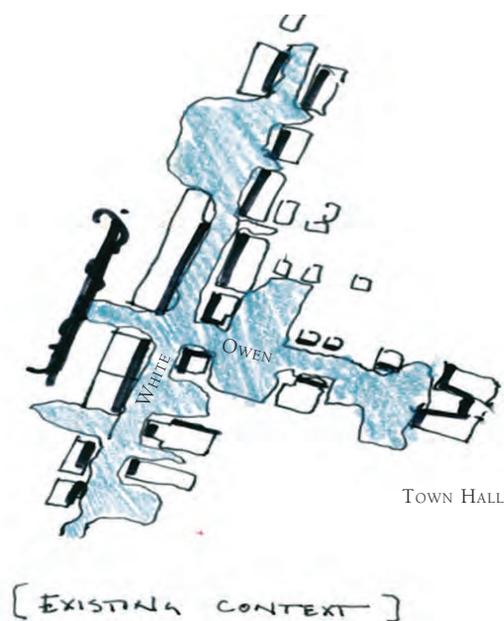
In order to connect the center of activity on White Street with the center of civic activity at Town Hall, we look to the obvious physical connection — Owen Avenue. It directly connects the plaza in front of Town Hall to White Street as well as all of the parking on Taylor and Brooks streets to the retail on White Street through a high quality people-first public space.

Currently, Owen is comprised of an inconsistent mix of vacant lots, parking lots, contemporary and historic homes, and single story commercial structures. Prioritizing infill development on Owen Avenue should be a short and long term strategy.

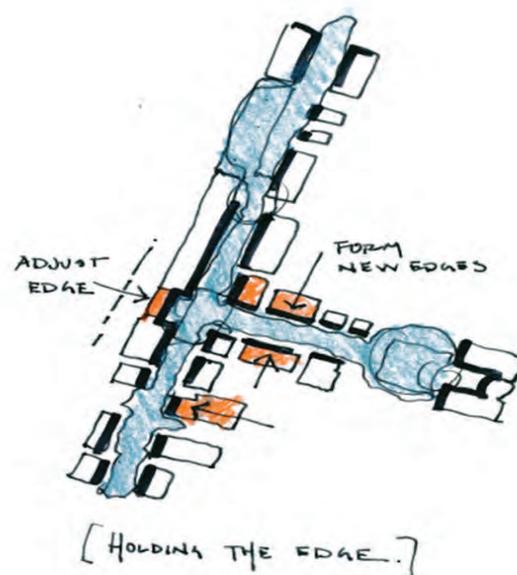
Owen Avenue is ideally suited for being transformed into an iconic festival street. Starting with temporary improvements, the

Town could simply paint the street with unique patterns or public art murals. A series of tactical projects could be tried on Owen, which could give the Town a chance to try different treatments and street designs temporarily to see what works best. This approach would also build consensus and social capital among Wake Forest residents and businesses.

Longer term investment should follow the tactical projects. Festival streets are shared streets; cars are allowed, but the streets are primarily designed for bicycles and pedestrians and are typically curbsless. By blurring the lines between the sidewalk and the street, we create a much larger public space that is easy to program and more comfortable for people.



- ▲ Existing urban fabric – White Street, Owen Avenue & Town Hall (Robby Johnson, Taylor Medlin – Wake Forest Downtown Design Studio)



- ▲ New buildings fill the gaps in the street edge, Owen Avenue becomes a festival street, and Town Hall Plaza is more prominent



▲ Existing Owen Avenue



▲ Wall Street – Spartanburg, SC

**RECOMMENDATION 6B:**  
 Transform Owen Avenue into a festival street that connects the retail core to the civic core with a unique urban experience.



▲ Figure 6.2: Proposed transformation of Owen Avenue to a shared-use festival street

## 6.3 Mobility Connections

### 6.3.1 Greenways

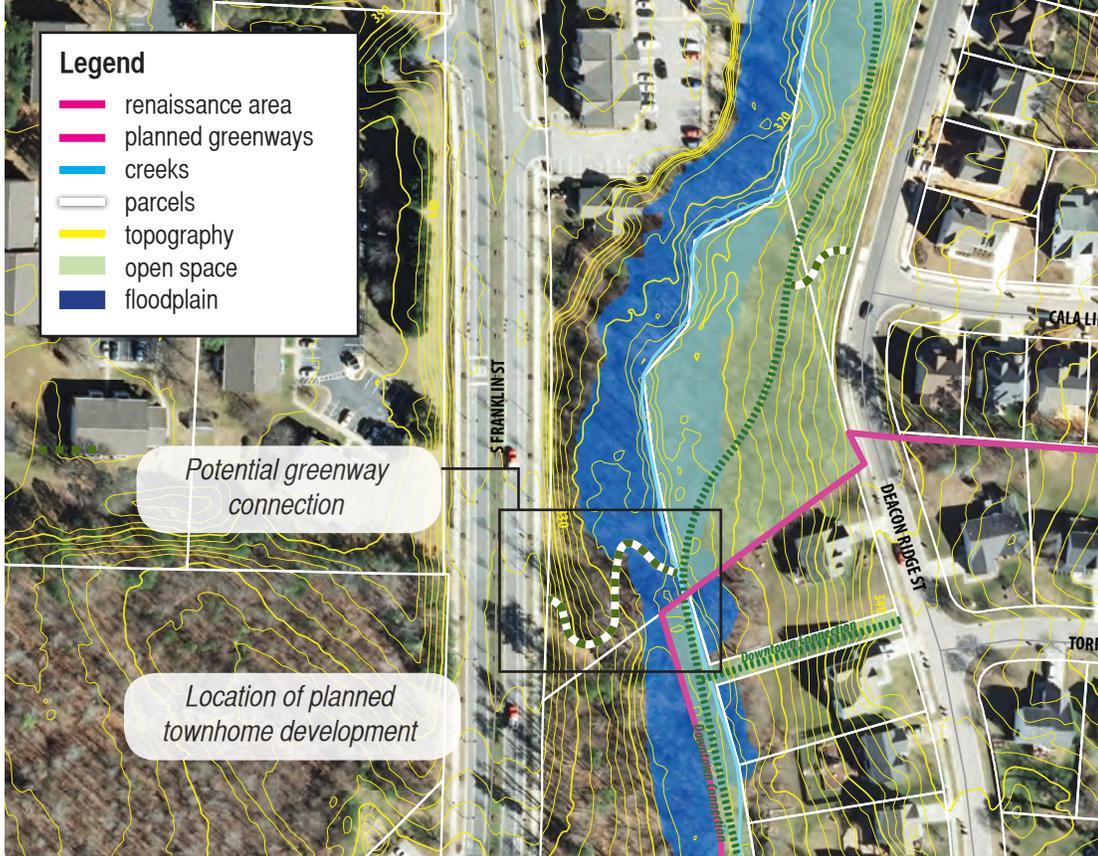
Greenways have long been known to be wonderful assets for communities. They offer residents opportunities to walk, bike and exercise — typically in a natural setting. Studies have shown real estate values increase in close proximity to greenways and increasingly, people consider trail systems as highly valued amenities when choosing where to live. Additionally, greenways are fast becoming viewed as important transportation infrastructure that provide ways for residents to bike or walk to work,

entertainment or shopping. For example, Charlotte is implementing a 26-mile trail crossing the county that will connect some 80 neighborhoods and provide a safe route to bike or walk to employment and daily needs.

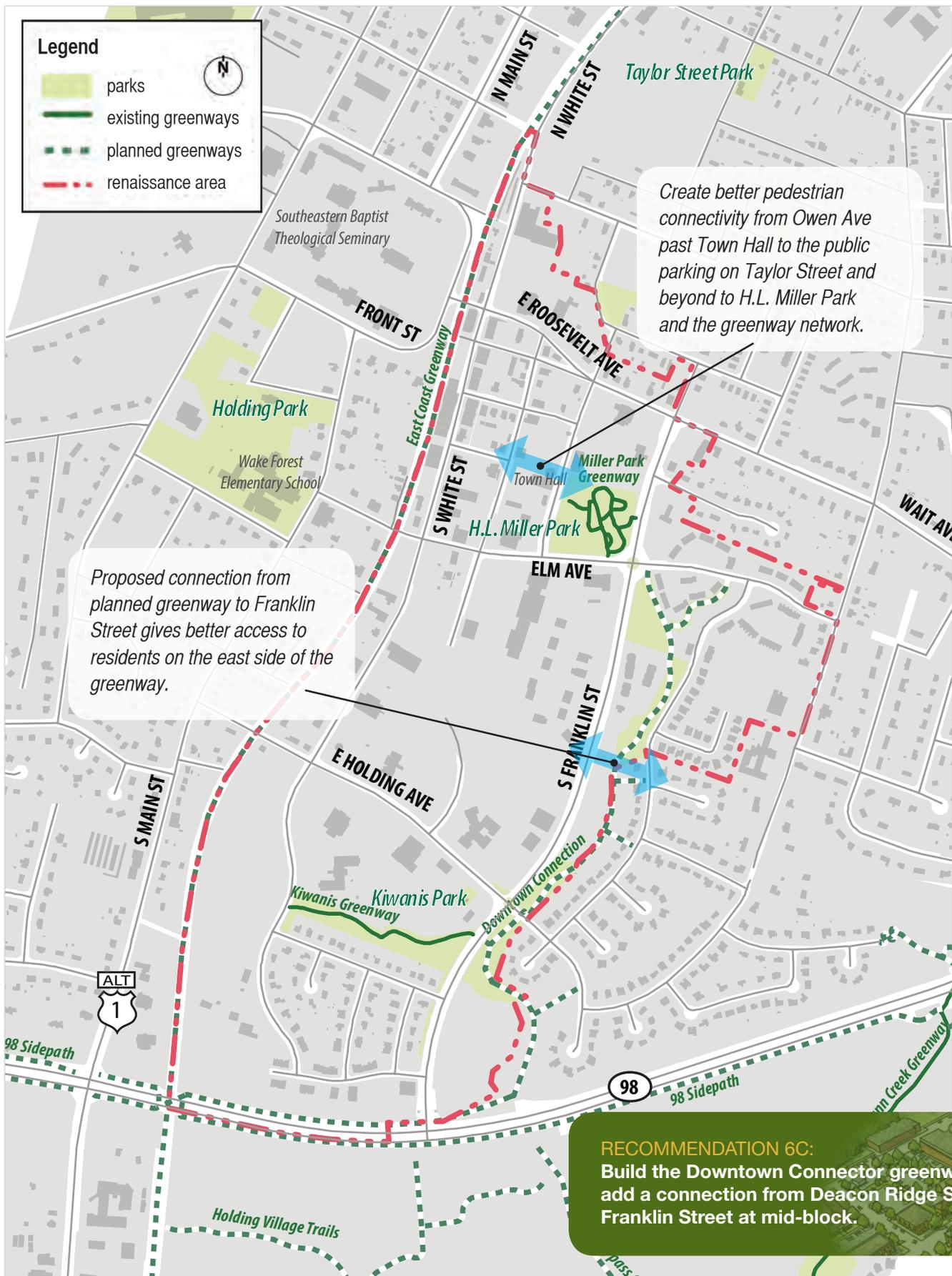
We will prioritize completing the Downtown Connector section of the planned greenway between NC 98 and Elm Avenue. With new townhomes being built at NC 98 and Franklin Street and between Franklin Street and Brooks Street, several hundred more residents will soon call the Renaissance Area home. An additional connection from Franklin Street to the planned greenway at mid-block between East Holding Avenue and Elm Avenue is needed. This will provide Deacon Ridge residents better access to downtown.



**RESOURCE: Wake Forest Open Space and Greenways Plan updated in 2009 (wakeforestnc.gov)**



▲ Potential alignment for new greenway connection from Franklin Street to the planned Downtown Connector and Deacon Ridge Street



▲ Figure 6.3.1: Wake Forest existing and planned greenways

### 6.3.2 Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities

Increasingly, especially in younger generations, the ability to bike and walk safely and enjoyably in a community is becoming a higher priority. Communities are putting more emphasis, and resources into improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Wake Forest completed a Bicycle Plan in 2008. Recommendations from the plan are shown on the opposite page. Likely because the rail crossing at Elm Avenue is proposed to be closed in the future, no new facilities are planned for that corridor. As Elm Avenue is a major connection from east to west through the Renaissance Area from Franklin Street to White Street and then to Main Street, and given the width of the street, adding bike lanes, even if they only connect

for a generation, is an important and visible improvement.

Similarly, the sidewalk network in downtown is fairly complete. Significant streetscape improvements were completed since the last Renaissance Plan in 2004, which included several new sidewalks and the widening of existing sidewalks.

But, a few gaps remain in the network, particularly on Brooks Street and Roosevelt Avenue. Additionally, we should ensure that urban neighborhoods adjacent to downtown have robust sidewalk connections into downtown in order to encourage and support walking.

Within the historic core, there are certain blocks that have existing sidewalks, but are interrupted by several unnecessary curb cuts. Some of these driveways can be closed without impairing site access, thereby improving the pedestrian experience. Furthermore, we should work to improve the walk from the White Street core to the Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center and planned townhomes on Brooks Street.



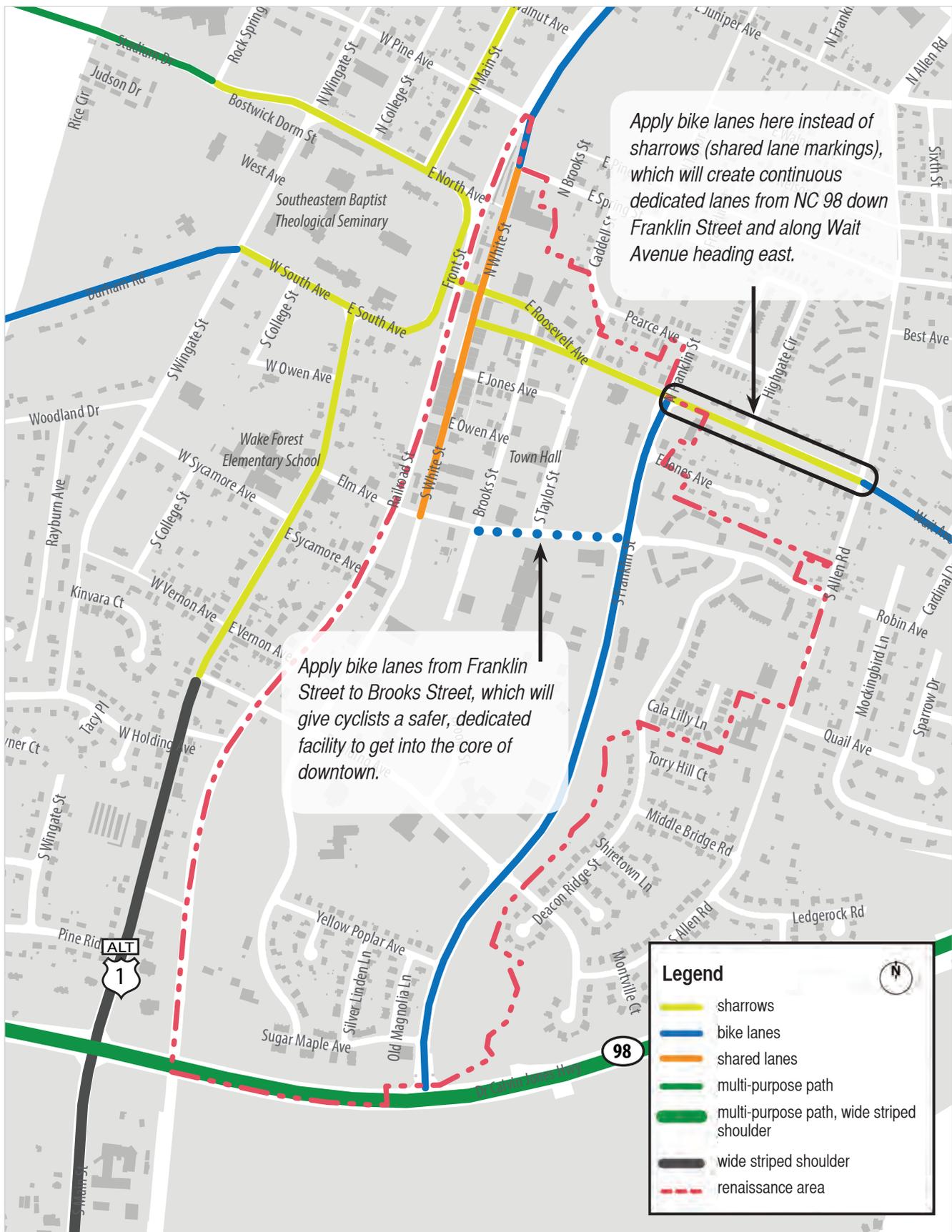
**RESOURCE: Wake Forest Bicycle Plan completed in 2008**  
([wakeforestnc.gov](http://wakeforestnc.gov))



**RESOURCE: Wake Forest Pedestrian Plan completed in 2006**  
([wakeforestnc.gov](http://wakeforestnc.gov))



▲ Cyclist riding with traffic on White Street downtown



▲ Figure 6.3.2: Wake Forest Bicycle Plan recommendations for downtown (2008)

**6.3.3 Existing Pedestrian Experience: Walking from White Street to Over the Falls**



▲ The historic core – a wonderful pedestrian environment with street trees, decorative materials, outdoor seating and shop fronts on both sides of the street.



▲ The pedestrian environment begins to break down moving south on White Street with vacant lots and an overall lack of active ground floor uses and destinations.

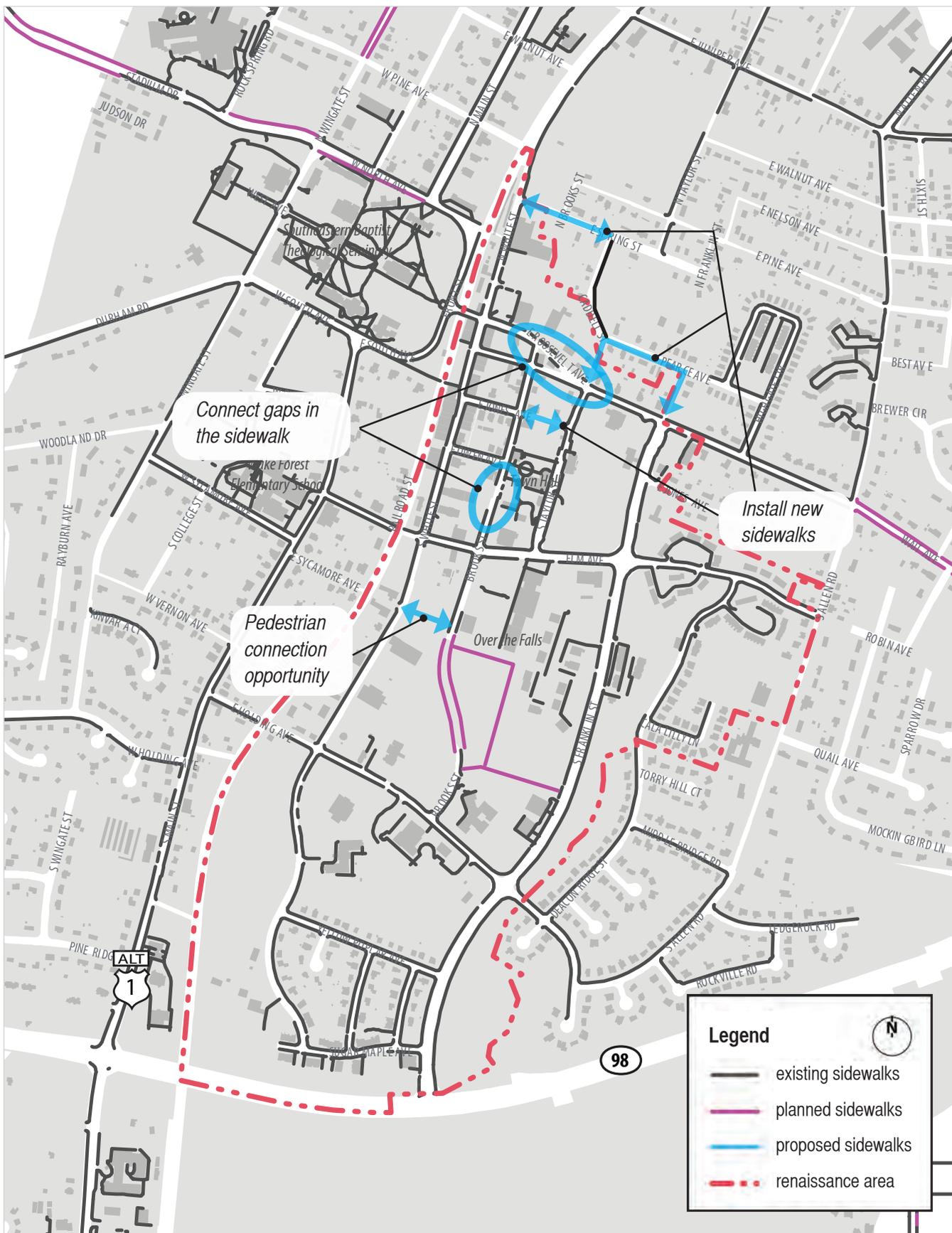


▲ White Street & Elm Avenue – decorative streetscape elements are present, but buildings are set back from the street and uses are not conducive to a pedestrian experience.



▲ Elm Avenue in front of Over the Falls – transitions quickly to an auto-oriented environment with a lack of street trees, wide streets and lack of buildings fronting the streets, which contribute to a poor pedestrian experience.

**RECOMMENDATION 6D:**  
 Fill any identified gaps in the sidewalk network and construct new sidewalks where suggested.



▲ Figure 6.3.3: Existing and proposed sidewalks

## 6.4 Streetscapes

Although we have completed some streetscape improvements in the historic core area in recent years, there are a number of additional phases that would build on the work that has been done and create a much more walkable environment.

### 6.4.1 Brooks Street & Roosevelt Avenue

There are a few common improvements that we need to focus on throughout the Renaissance Area, which are illustrated in the following detailed recommendations for improving Brooks Street and Roosevelt Avenue:

- » **REDUCE CURB CUTS.** Several parcels have unnecessary curb cuts. We will work with each property owner to establish which curb cuts are absolutely necessary to maintain access to the property and which can be closed. Ideally, each property would be accessed from a side or rear street rather than from the main frontage street. This approach provides a safer environment for pedestrians, as cars are crossing the sidewalk in fewer locations.

**RECOMMENDATION 6E:**  
Continue to complete streetscape improvements throughout the Renaissance Area prioritizing those that improve safety.



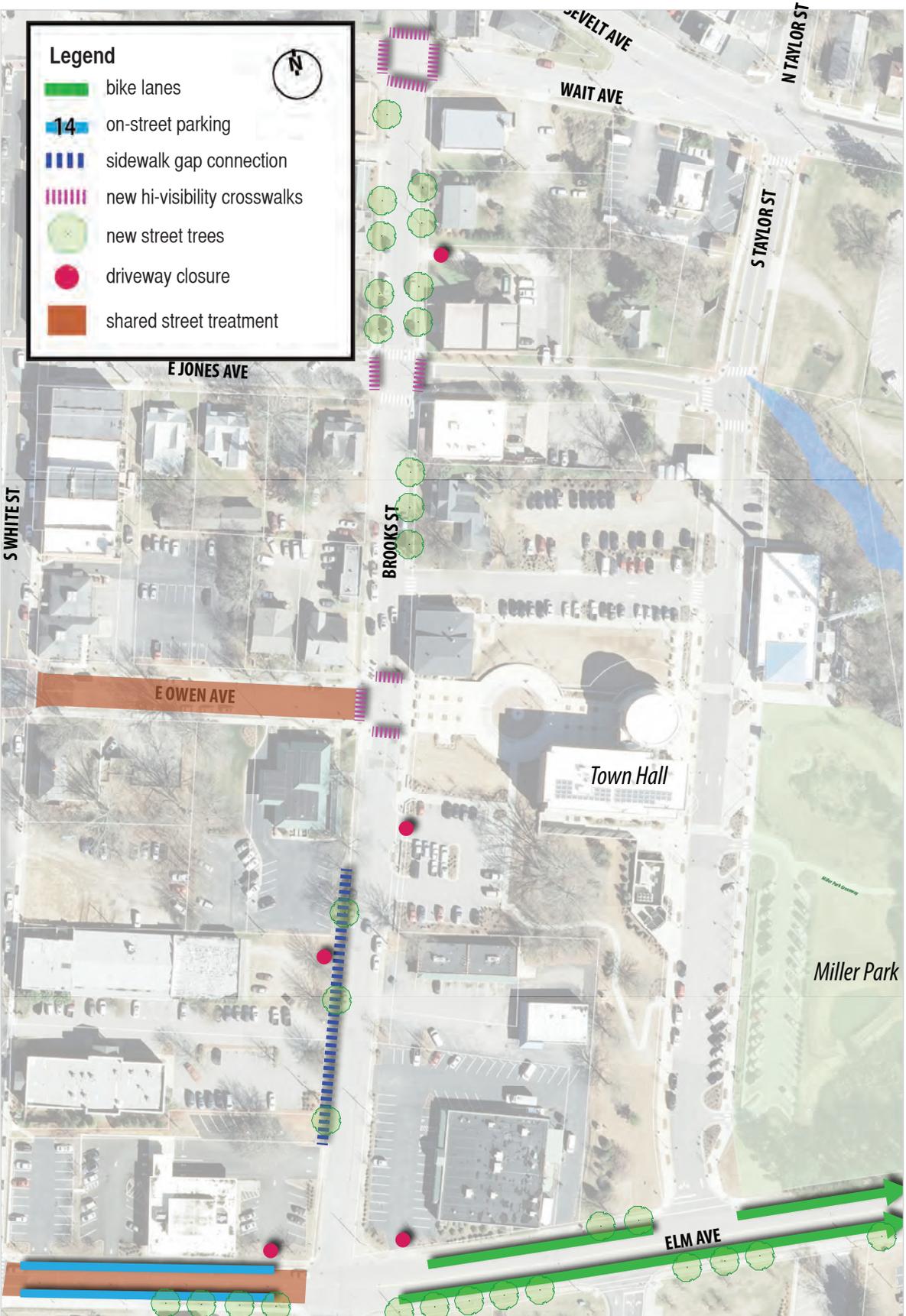
▲ *Tactical crosswalk improvement – Detroit, MI*



▲ *Three curb cuts to the same parcel within a few feet of each other on Wait Avenue*

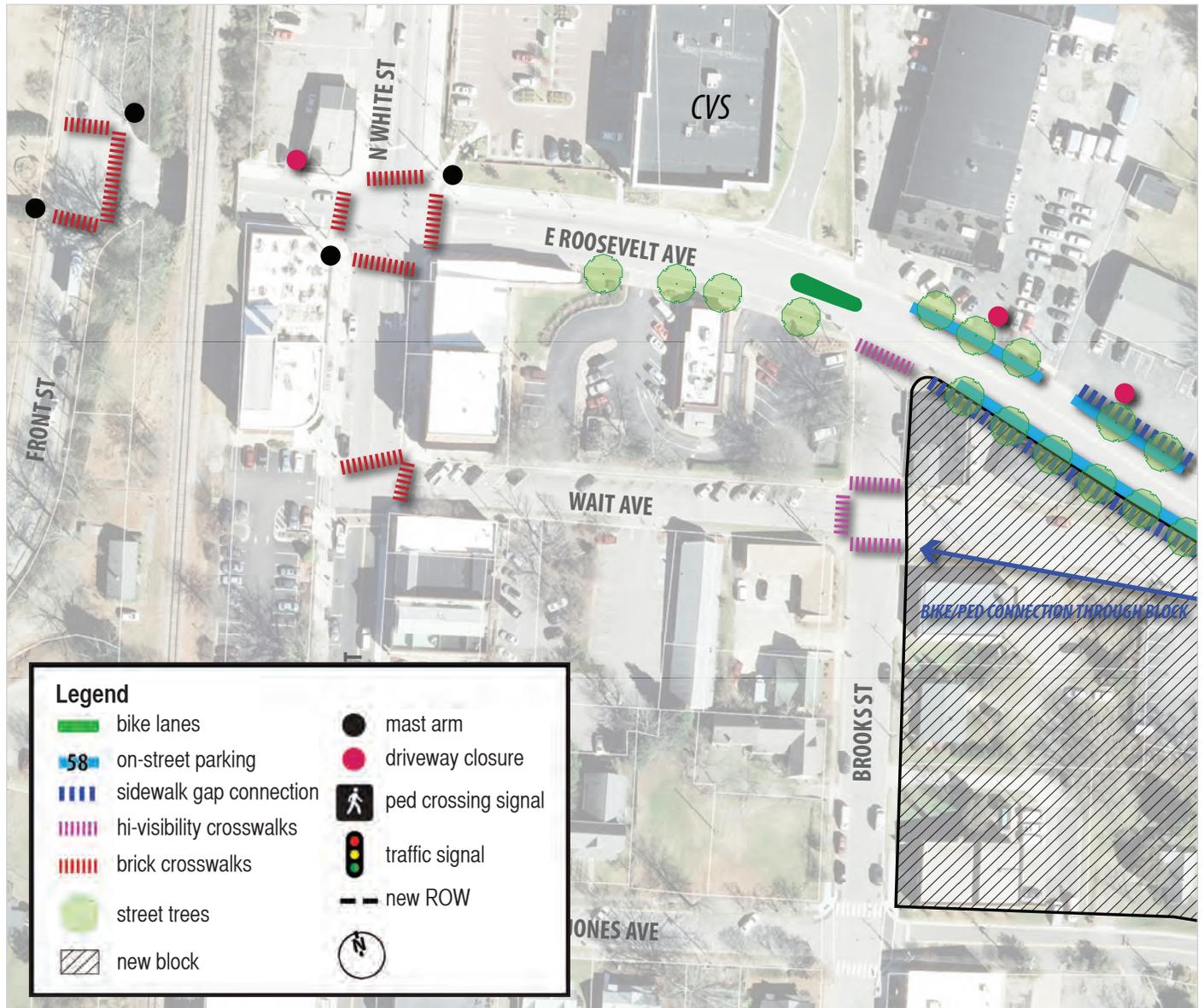


▲ *Permanent crosswalk enhancement – Charlotte, NC*



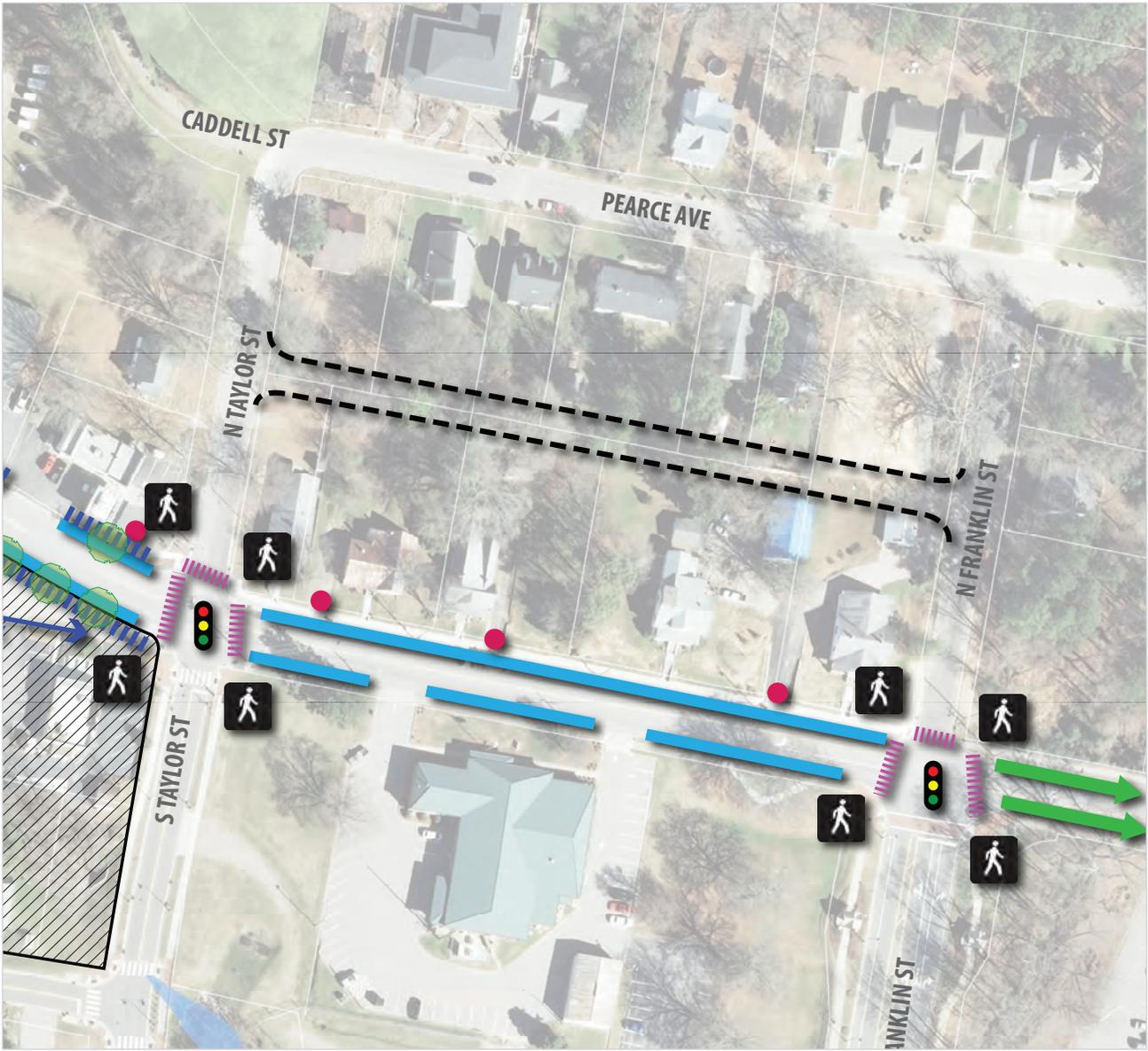
▲ Figure 6.4.1.A: Proposed streetscape improvements for Brooks Street from Elm Avenue to Roosevelt Avenue

- » **ENHANCE CROSSWALKS.** The decorative, stamped brick crosswalks on White Street in the historic core are very attractive and a great signal to pedestrians that there is a safe crossing. We need to implement enhanced crosswalks throughout more of the Renaissance Area and should also consider incorporating art and color where appropriate. For example, we can engage local artists to explore new colorful patterns or designs at selected locations.



▲ Figure 6.4.1.B: Proposed streetscape improvements for Roosevelt Avenue from Front Street to Franklin Street

- » **PLANT MORE TREES.** There are many beautiful and healthy street trees in the Renaissance Area that add shade and greenery to the streetscape, but we've identified several locations where they are conspicuously absent. Some simple and inexpensive plantings in strategic spots can remedy this situation.



▲ Figure 6.4.1.B (cont.): Proposed streetscape improvements for Roosevelt Avenue from Front Street to Franklin Street



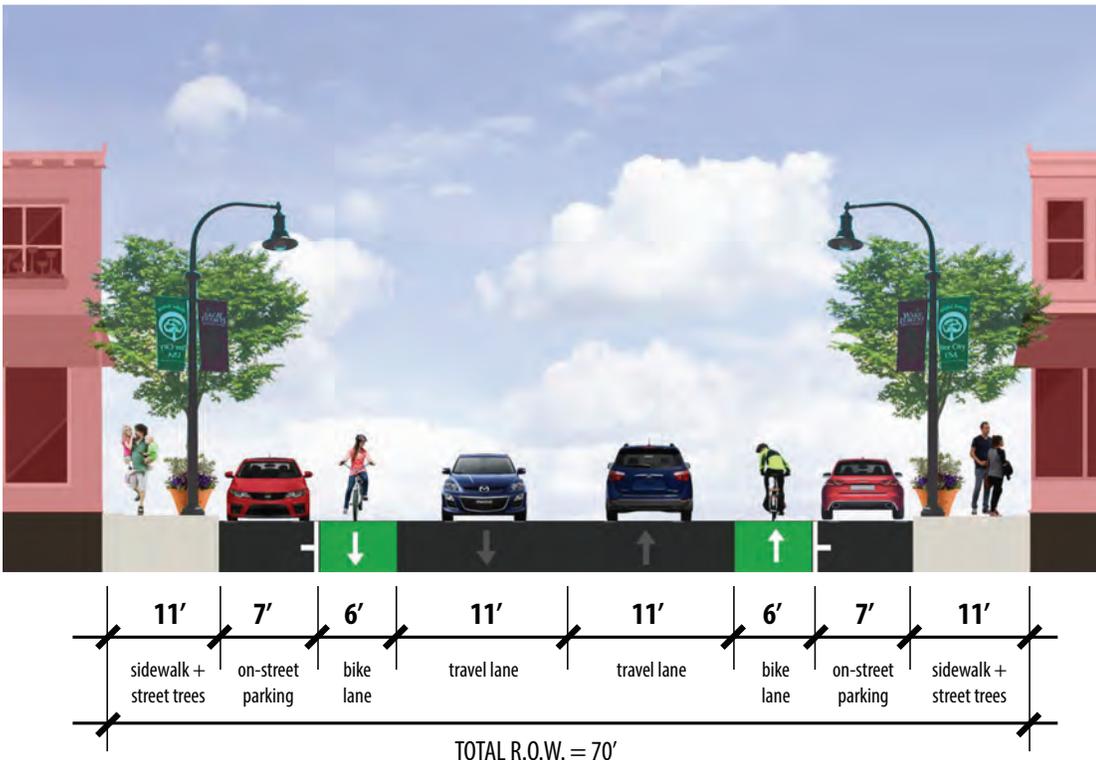
▲ Existing Elm Avenue (Franklin to Brooks)

▼ Proposed improvements for Elm Avenue (Franklin to Brooks). The 11 foot wide sidewalk and street tree zone could be designed as continuous hardscape from back of curb to the building with trees in grates, or as a 6 foot sidewalk with a 5 foot planting strip at back of curb. The former option would be more supportive of an urban street feel with outdoor seating.

### 6.4.2 Elm Avenue Streetscape

Elm Avenue is one of the widest streets in the Renaissance Area. From curb to curb, the roadway is about 50 feet at the widest point and accommodates two travel lanes and on-street parking on both sides. Typical two lane streets with on-street parking are only 38 feet wide leaving an excess of 12 feet of unused asphalt. These wide and straight travel lanes encourage drivers to go well above the speed limit as they mimic a highway. This behavior increases vehicular noise in the downtown area and is aggressive and unpleasant to pedestrians and cyclists.

By narrowing the travel lanes and including bike lanes on Elm Avenue from Franklin Street to Brooks Street, we will still accommodate on-street parking on both sides — but also make it a much more tame



street. From Brooks to White Street, where the asphalt is narrower, an additional 3 feet will be required when redevelopment occurs. To enhance the visual connection of White Street to Brooks, we recommend using a curbless brick street detail similar to Main Street in Greenville, SC.

As new development occurs on Elm Avenue, the sidewalk should be widened on both sides. From White Street to Taylor Street, a width of 10–16 feet is ideal, the latter accommodating outdoor seating. From Taylor Street to Franklin Street, a sidewalk width of 8–10 feet is ideal. Through movement should be maintained, but slow considerably, on Elm Avenue from White Street to Brooks Street so traffic moving eastward from Main Street does not back up onto the railroad tracks.

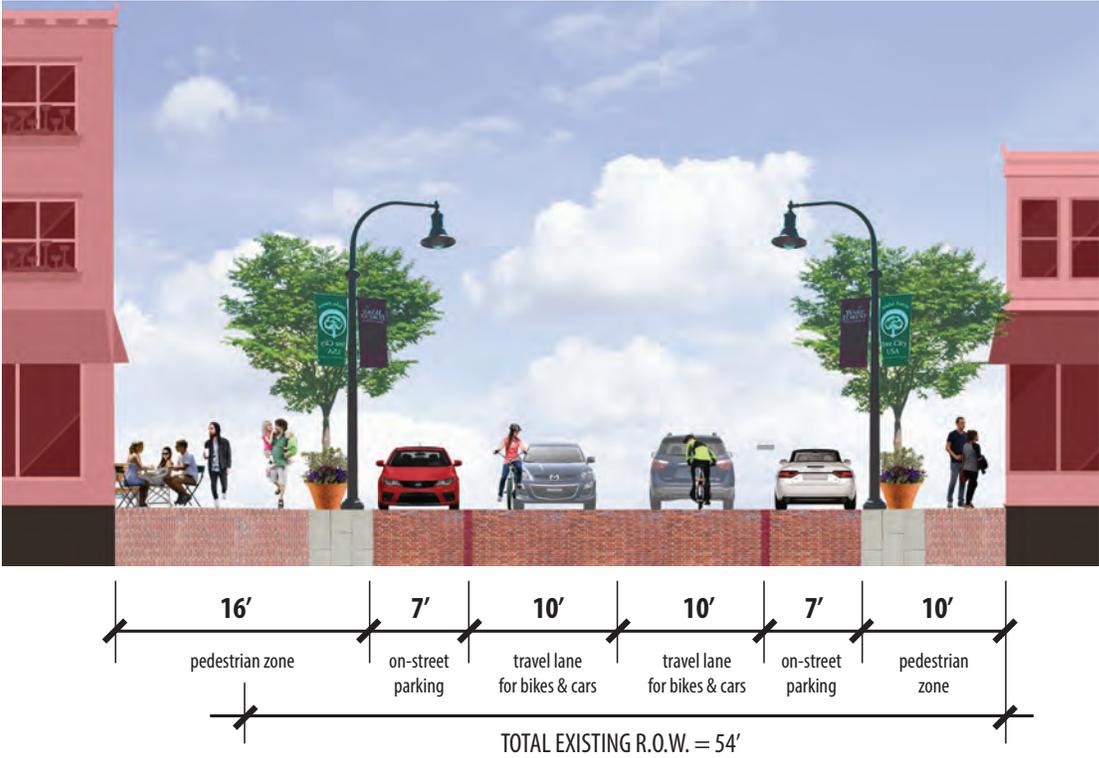


▲ Brick detail on Main Street – Greenville, SC



▲ Curbless design with bollards on Main Street – Greenville, SC

▼ Proposed improvements for Elm Avenue (Brooks to White)





*Public parking lot behind historic buildings on White Street*

# 7

## Manage the Cars



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Downtown has sufficient existing parking*
- Improved management of current parking*
- Shared parking opportunities*
- New on-street parking opportunities*

# 7 Manage the Cars



## 7.1 Existing Parking Conditions

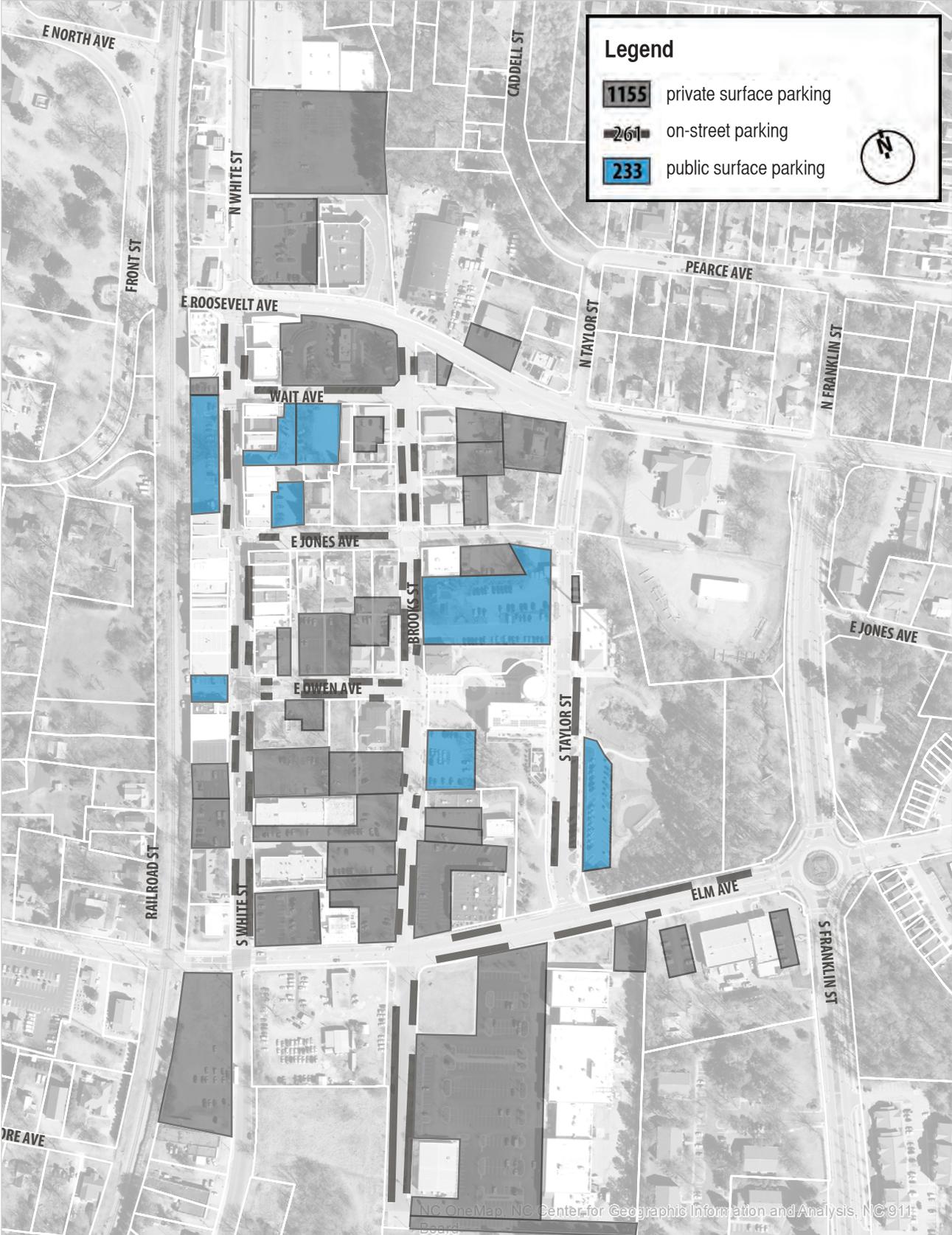
Parking in downtown Wake Forest is a topic that can be somewhat polarizing. One faction of the community believes there is not enough parking while some believe the issue lies in people's unwillingness to walk a few blocks. A detailed parking analysis of both private, public and on-street parking spaces was conducted (the details of that investigation are found on the next page.) A total of 1,649 parking spaces were counted within the downtown core. Traditionally, this quantity could support well over half a million square feet of mixed use development.



▲ *Surface parking in downtown*



▲ *On-street parking and dirt lot parking along White Street*



▲ An analysis of existing parking conditions with existing public, private and on-street spaces.

## 7.2 Short Term Parking Strategies

A few simple strategies will increase the parking available for patrons in the downtown core. Viewing parking as a utility and managing it as such will improve the perception of parking issues in downtown with real results. The diagram on the adjacent page illustrates an additional 122 parking spaces created through low-cost improvements easily made in the short term.

### **Enforce current timed spaces**

Although downtown has several on-street parking zones marked for 2-hour parking, it is not enforced. Enforcing the 2-hour limit, especially on White Street, will create more frequent turnover and availability of those parking spaces.

### **Consolidate some driveways (2 to 1) and reduce curb cuts** *(note this from Section 6.4)*

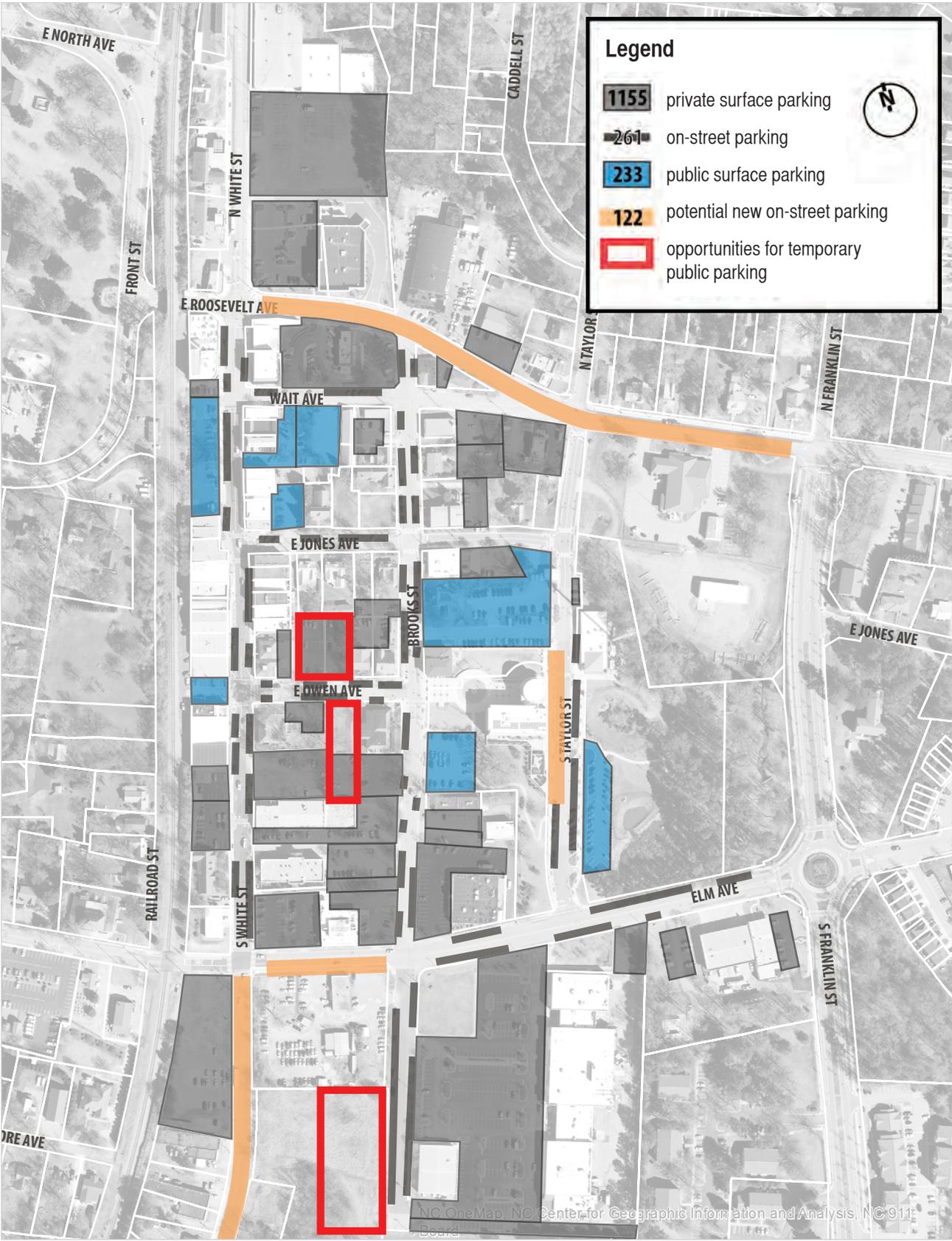
There are several instances that we identified where one property is served by multiple driveways. By reducing the number of driveways where access to the property is not impaired, we can install three parallel on-street parking spaces for each curb cut that is abandoned.

### **Add spaces along Taylor Street behind Town Hall**

Taylor Street is served by some parallel on-street parking along the west side of the street behind Town Hall, but there is approximately 320 feet of space that is available and currently not marked for another use. That is ample space to install an additional 16 parallel on-street parking spaces.



**RECOMMENDATION 7A:**  
Implement both short and long term parking strategies with the overall goal of managing this public utility in the most efficient manner possible.



▲ Parking strategies for downtown Wake Forest

**Coordinate shared parking strategies with private parking lot owners**

Some private parking lot owners in downtown have informal agreements that allow the public to use their lots after business hours and on weekends, but no formal agreements are in place and there is no formal signage to inform the public that such private spots are available for use during select times. The Town should work with owners of private lots to form shared parking agreements or easements.

**Install signage for private lots with shared parking agreements**

In private lots that allow public parking under certain conditions, install appropriate signage that clearly notifies visitors as to when such private spots are available for public parking.

**Investigate the use of the Wake Forest Baptist Church lots for downtown employee parking**

Rather than downtown employees using public parking spaces that would otherwise be utilized by visitors, work with the Baptist Church to make a certain number of spots available in their lots for use by downtown employees during off-peak times for the church. These lots are only a 2–3 minute walk across the railroad tracks to White Street shops.



*“No place is worth caring about that doesn’t have a parking problem.”*

— ROLLIN STANLEY

## 7.3 Long Term Parking Strategies

As downtown continues to evolve, longer term strategies for parking include:

### **Add a pay station to the White Street public lot**

The public parking lot on White Street is likely the most convenient and coveted lot in downtown, as it is well-located, is free of charge and has clear signage. As parking demand increases in downtown, we recommend the Town begin charging a fee for parking in this lot.

### **Meter White Street spaces**

Once the free 2-hour White Street parking is managed properly and parking demand increases, install parking meters. This is another prime parking location that should be in high demand and have frequent turnover.

### **Increase parking fees and transit accessibility**

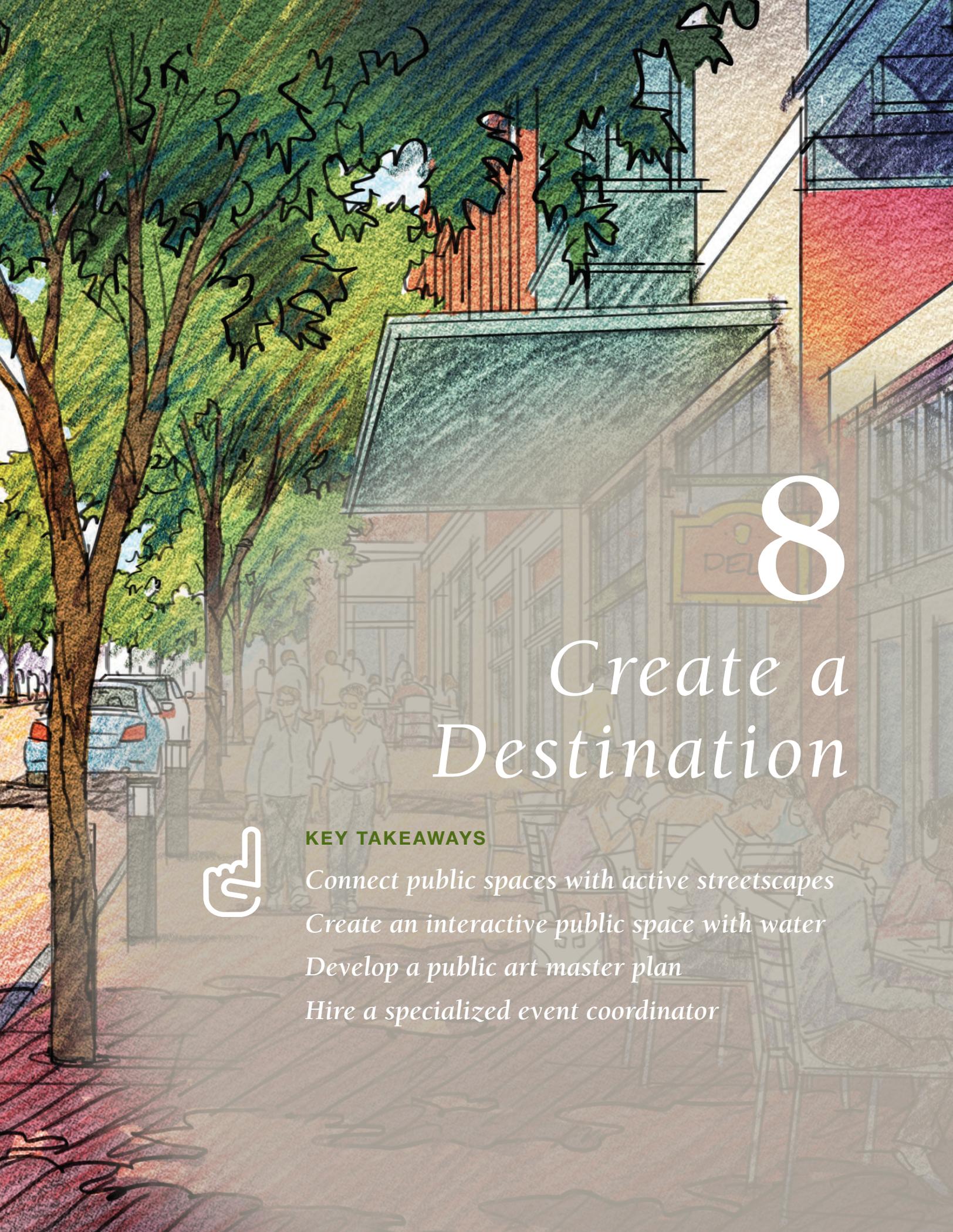
Over time, increase parking fees for metered spots and public lots as well as public transportation access.

### **Build a public parking deck (only for a specialized use)**

A structured parking deck is too costly and not necessary for downtown Wake Forest neither with the current demand nor with the forecasted build out. However, if the Town desires to build a specialized use development, such as a performing arts center or other large public venue, then the need for a structured parking deck to serve that and other nearby uses should be studied.



*Vision for new development along Elm Avenue  
looking west from the intersection at Brooks Street  
toward White Street*



# 8

## Create a Destination



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

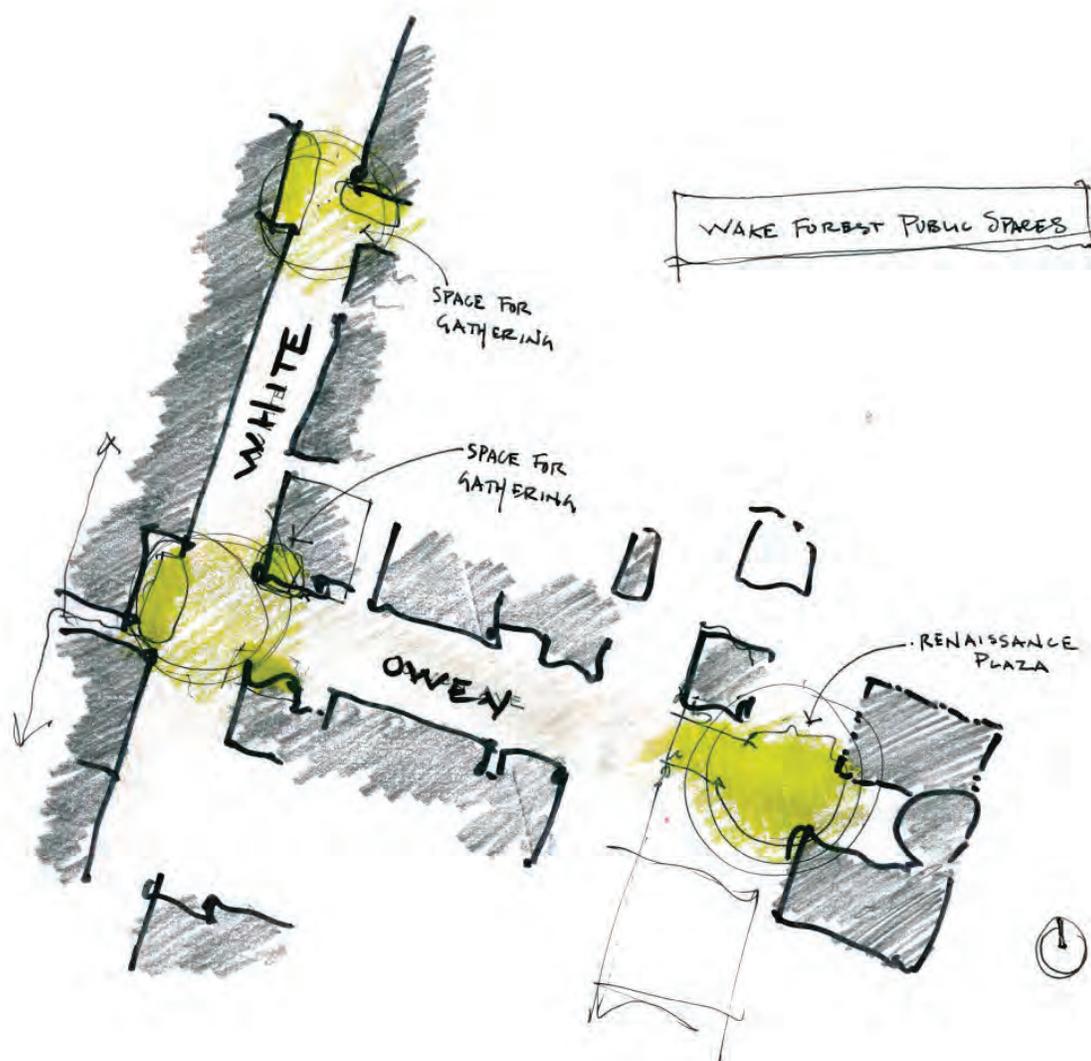
- Connect public spaces with active streetscapes*
- Create an interactive public space with water*
- Develop a public art master plan*
- Hire a specialized event coordinator*

## 8 Create a Destination

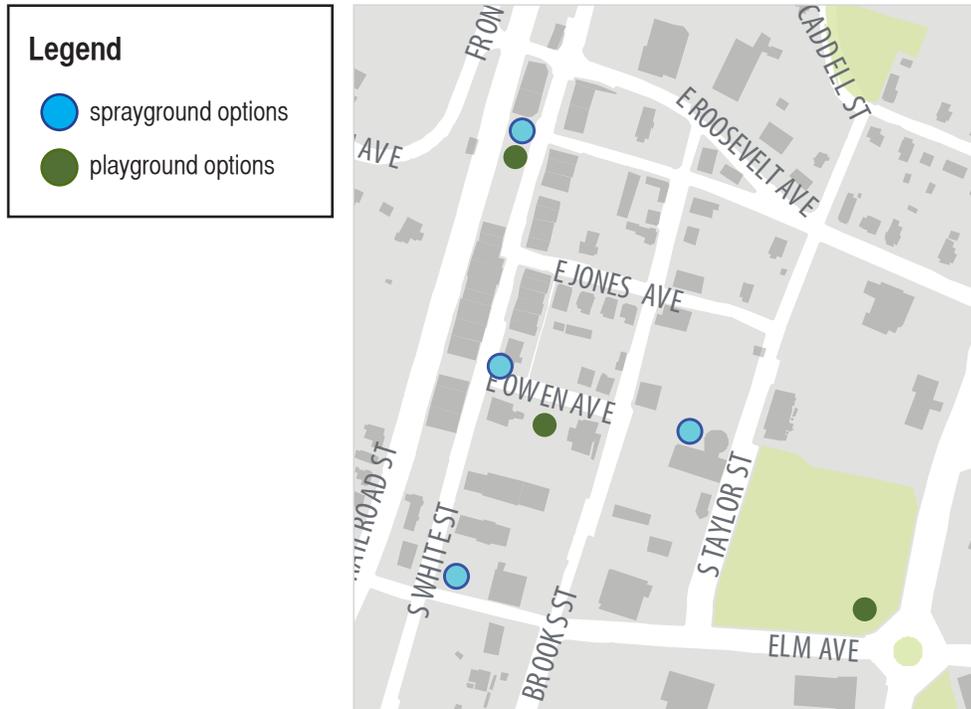


### 8.1 Connecting Public Spaces

Downtown Wake Forest should offer a diversity of public spaces of varying sizes and degrees of activity to its patrons and residents. Experiencing these spaces and the connections between them must be a safe, enjoyable journey. The diagram below illustrates the concept of forming a connection from the municipal plaza down to White Street and beyond.



▲ Diagram illustrating the importance of connecting and enhancing key public spaces in downtown (Robby Johnson, Taylor Medlin — Downtown Design Studio)



▲ Potential locations for spraygrounds & playgrounds

## 8.2 Spraygrounds & Playgrounds

Wake Forest has done a superior job in providing programmed events to activate the downtown area. Successful downtowns add a layer to this, interactive public spaces that are free to the public and require no programming. Attracting families to downtown with spaces designed for children will be key in Wake Forest's continued evolution into a more vibrant place. The diagram above illustrates potential locations for both spraygrounds and playgrounds as part of this strategy.

Spraygrounds have distinct benefits that set them apart from other public spaces. They use water, but avoid the issues of pools and lakes that involve knowing how to swim and other safety issues. Spraygrounds are growing in popularity among parents and children as a convenient alternative to pools and lakes. Additionally, they can serve as an interactive art element above and beyond their recreational benefits. Lighting can be incorporated to enhance the artful columns of water spurts at night. Splashing water also serves as a background noise in some public spaces, like spraygrounds.

Care should be taken when locating and designing new spraygrounds and playgrounds, especially in close proximity to public streets. While they are excellent at bringing vibrancy and activity to the street, they must also be safe for children at play. Detailed design and planning of these spaces should find a balance between addressing the street and providing safe enclosure for children at play.



▲ Interactive water feature



▲ Interactive water feature



▲ Playground equipment



▲ Landscape elements and sand box

**RECOMMENDATION 8A:**  
Identify and implement an interactive civic space in downtown Wake Forest that attracts families through play and water.

## 8.3 Public Art

Interest and intrigue are key elements of the pedestrian experience. Public art as part of the vibrancy of downtown offers the opportunity for Wake Forest to establish an identifiable and unique character. Downtown has successful public art, but could use more installations in a variety of media. With the native talent in the community, identifying a variety of art forms and themes for new temporary and permanent public art installations is an achievable task.



▲ Existing public art in downtown



▲ Greenville, SC

**RECOMMENDATION 8B:**  
 Develop a community art master plan which identifies opportunities for building murals, sculptures and other forms of creative thinking.



▲ Asheville, NC



▲ St. Louis, MO



▲ Asheville, NC

## 8.4 Event Programming

The Town has used event programming as a superior tool to create fun, energetic activity in downtown. Events that have found love in the community include Friday Night on White, the Christmas Parade, Music at Midday, and Dirt Day. A recent survey conducted by the Town revealed that 99% of business owners have found these events increase their business by 50%. The scale and frequency of these events requires this responsibility be taken on by a full time employee of the Town.



**RECOMMENDATION 8C:**  
 Hire an event coordinator to manage, promote and execute Town related activities/festivals.

▲ Downtown Wake Forest event programming in action



▲ Downtown Wake Forest event programming in action

*Vision for future character of Brooks Street south of Elm Avenue near Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center*



A detailed illustration of a vibrant city street scene. On the left, a row of lush green trees lines a sidewalk. In the background, there are multi-story buildings with windows and balconies. A white car is parked on the street, and a red car is visible further down. In the foreground, several people are walking across a crosswalk. The overall style is a mix of sketchy line art and textured, colored areas.

# 9

## *Put People First*



### **KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Nimble projects to activate the public realm*
- Improved crosswalks & pedestrian networks*
- Places to linger & play*
- Improved lighting*
- Pleasant streetscapes*

# 9 Put People First



## 9.1 Tactical Improvements

### 9.1.1 What are Tactical Improvements?

Tactical improvements are strategic projects that usually involve little capital, can be implemented quickly and may be temporary, but can test an idea. People have been doing this for a long time, but the practice has become popular recently through the term Tactical Urbanism and various publications associated with it.

It is also known as:

- » guerrilla urbanism
- » pop-up urbanism
- » city repair
- » DIY urbanism

#### CHARACTERISTICS:

- » phased, incremental, scalable
- » authentic, local concepts
- » short term, low risk, high impact
- » build social capital
- » improves underutilized places
- » focuses on human-scale concepts
- » creates place
- » lots of public involvement
- » sometimes led by citizens with no municipal involvement



▲ Parklet for a day



▲ Pallet park



▲ Guerrilla gardening



▲ Yarn bombing



▲ Temporary art installation



▲ Open streets, group yoga

### 9.1.2 Outdoor Dining at The Forks

The Forks is a prominent restaurant in downtown Wake Forest located at the corner of Brooks Street and Elm Avenue. However, with very few windows, it is difficult for anyone outside, whether in a car or on foot, to know how active the establishment is on the inside. Additionally, the side of the building that faces Elm Avenue is occupied by dense shrubs and a blank white wall — a perfect wall for a colorful mural done by a local artist.

As one of the more prominent corners in downtown Wake Forest, outdoor seating would be ideal here. Initially, the seating can be arranged around the Elm Avenue side of the building by removing some shrubbery. A more robust outdoor dining area is also possible. The patio space can extend around to the front of the building to help reduce the visual impact of parking and create outdoor activity and vibrancy on the Elm Avenue streetscape.



▲ *Low-cost, temporary outdoor seating can be upgraded later after success is established*



▲ *The Forks — existing*

#### RECOMMENDATION 9A:

**Test outdoor dining at The Forks to add outdoor vibrancy and encourage pedestrian activity on Elm Avenue.**



▲ *Create highly desirable outdoor seating by taking over a few parking spaces and removing shrubbery*

### 9.1.3 Elm Avenue Bike Lanes (Brooks to Franklin)

Given the existing street section for this stretch of Elm Avenue, bike lanes could be implemented within the existing roadway and no curb alterations will be necessary. This is a low cost, high impact project worth implementing in the near term. New bike lanes on this section of Elm Avenue will connect cyclists from the existing bike lanes on Franklin Street to downtown via Brooks Street, which is a low volume street

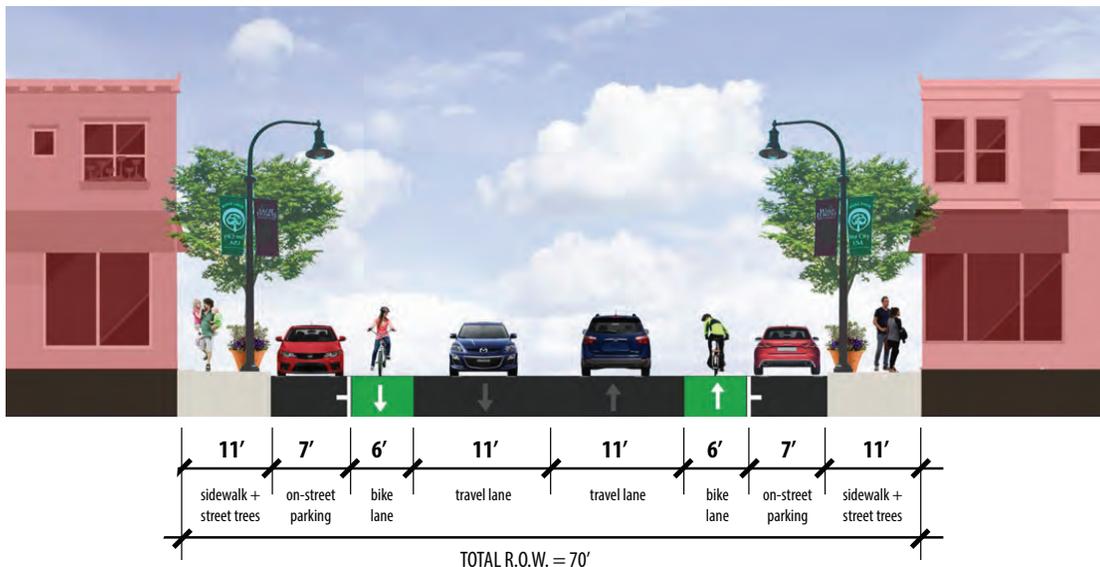
with slow speeds and is safer for cyclists. This improvement will also give citizens on the east side of downtown their first dedicated bike facility that connects them to downtown. Being a low cost project that is easily implemented, it will be a good way to evaluate how our citizens respond to the change and use the facility.

**RECOMMENDATION 9B:**  
**Restripe Elm Avenue to include bike lanes to give the east side a dedicated bicycle facility connecting them to downtown.**



▲ Existing Elm Avenue (Brooks Street to Franklin Street)

▼ Proposed bicycle improvements for Elm Avenue (Brooks Street to Franklin Street). An 11 foot wide sidewalk and street tree zone could be designed as continuous hardscape from back of curb to the building with trees in grates, or as a 6 foot sidewalk with a 5 foot planting strip at back of curb. The former option would be more supportive of an urban street feel with outdoor seating.



### 9.1.4 White Street Loading Zone

Lots of placemaking potential exists in front of the very active White Street Brewing Company. Currently, there is an underutilized and unwanted loading zone, which creates a dead zone (a lack of activity) on the street. This space could be utilized to activate the street and sidewalk in front of the brewery by installing a parklet. A parklet is a low cost, temporary outdoor public space with seating that would take the place of the loading zone space and is protected from vehicular traffic. If successful, this parklet could be upgraded and enhanced to be permanent. Parklets, especially those located near restaurant-type uses, have been extremely successful at bringing an energy and liveliness to many urban areas.



▲ Existing loading zone in front of White Street Brewing

**RECOMMENDATION 9C:**  
Install a temporary parklet in the loading zone; upon evaluation of its success, consider enhanced permanent features for the space.



▲ Proposed parklet in the loading zone in front of White Street Brewing and Shorty's

### 9.1.5 Front Street Improvements

The intersection of Roosevelt and Front Street is one of the most notable gateways into downtown. But, in its current condition, one would never know that downtown Wake Forest is nearby. There is existing signage pointing to downtown, but it is small and difficult to notice. A gateway of this prominence should have enhanced treatments that give a sense of arrival and mark the entrance to downtown in a significant way.

Crosswalks should be installed with a decorative brick texture and we should consider enhancing the intersection with colorful art. Monument signage announcing the gateway to downtown can arch over Roosevelt Avenue and additional signage should be placed at the stairs leading up over the railroad tracks and into downtown. Colorful landscaping and stone retaining walls will further enhance this intersection and mimic the existing features on the property of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

**RECOMMENDATION 9D:**  
Transform the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and Front Street into a prominent gateway to downtown Wake Forest.



▲ Existing nondescript gateway to downtown on Front Street in front of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary



▲ Proposed gateway enhancements at Front Street and Roosevelt Avenue making the intersection more attractive and pedestrian friendly

### 9.1.6 Railroad Walkway

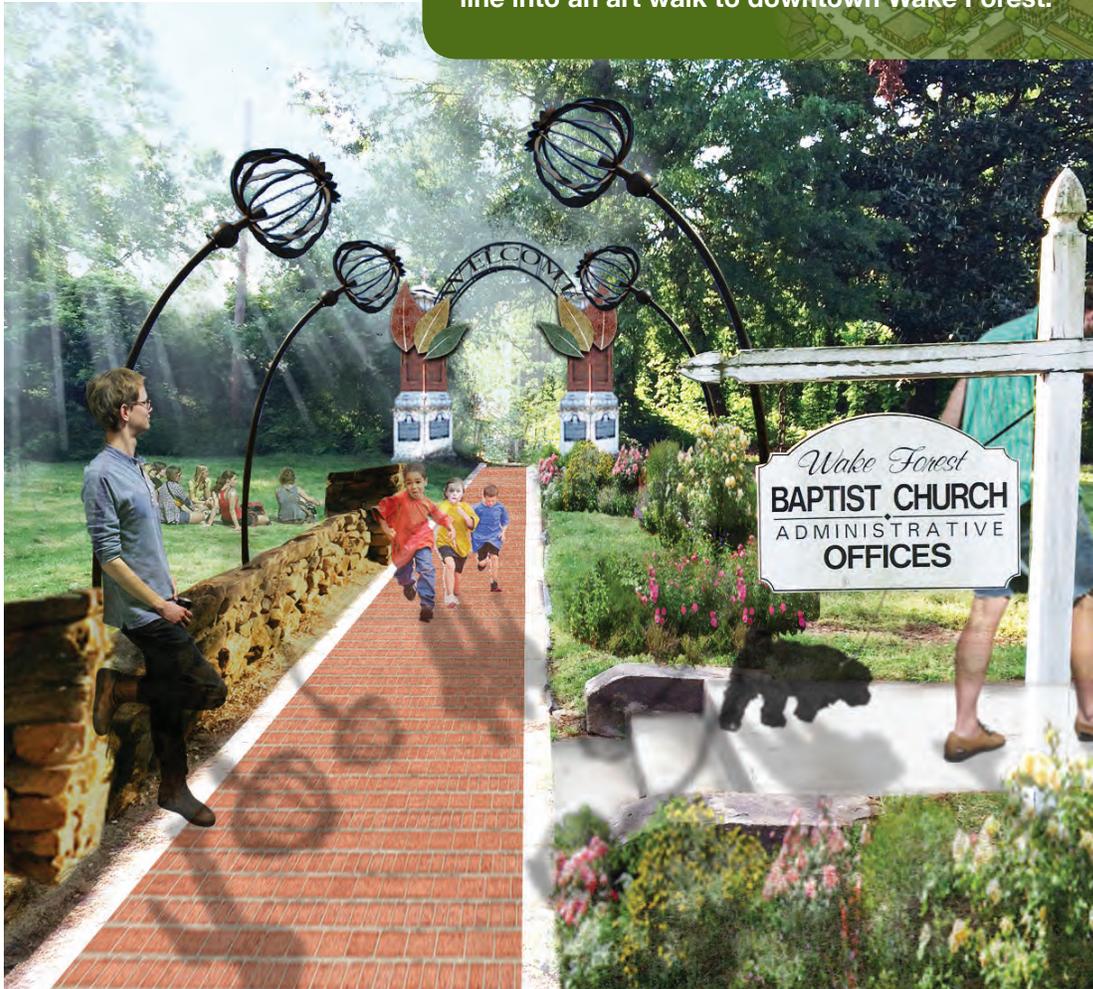
This nondescript path leads from Main Street and Front Street across the railroad tracks directly into the heart of downtown. In its current condition, it looks like a road to nowhere. Potential, low cost enhancements include public art, lighting, and signage to create a unique approach into downtown for pedestrians.



▲ Existing path leading to downtown from Front Street that crosses the railroad tracks

#### RECOMMENDATION 9E:

Transform the pedestrian pathway across the rail line into an art walk to downtown Wake Forest.



▲ Proposed improvements to the walkway using landscaping, decorative paving treatment, public art, lighting, and monument signs that turn this path into an iconic gateway to downtown



▲ Existing rail bridge underpass is a gateway to downtown that could be enhanced to mark the arrival to downtown

### 9.1.7 The Bridge

The rail bridge is a dominant feature and the major gateway into downtown. Many communities are turning bridges like this into an opportunity to implement color into their nighttime environment. Incorporating LED lighting that provides a range of color options could be cast upward onto the underside of the bridge to enhance the perceived safety for a pedestrian passing under the bridge when it is dark out. It would also make the bridge an iconic and memorable feature in downtown, properly denoting a prominent gateway and activating the intersection of White and Roosevelt.

**RECOMMENDATION 9F:**  
Use interesting lighting techniques to make the bridge an iconic and memorable feature of downtown.



▲ Proposed tactical improvement using an artistic lighting installation to enhance the rail bridge gateway to downtown on Roosevelt Avenue

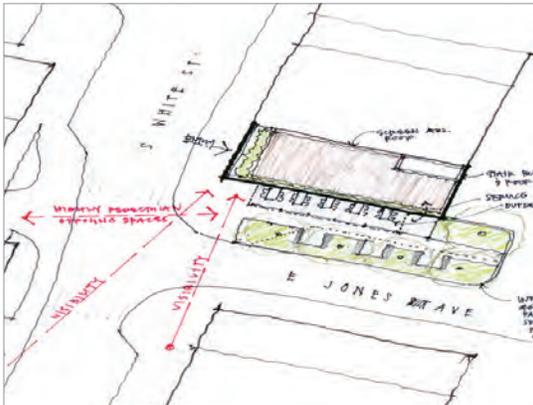
**9.1.8 153 S. White Street**

One great outcome of the recent Downtown Design Workshop was a concept to revitalize an historic building in the heart of downtown. 153 S. White Street is on the National Register of Historic Places, but it is vacant and the original storefront windows have been replaced. This building sits at the most vibrant intersection in downtown but is currently hindering the activity there. With a reasonable amount of investment, the storefront windows can be restored and the building can become a vibrant coffee shop, restaurant/pub, bakery or any number of active uses, adding to the atmosphere that we are striving for in downtown Wake Forest.

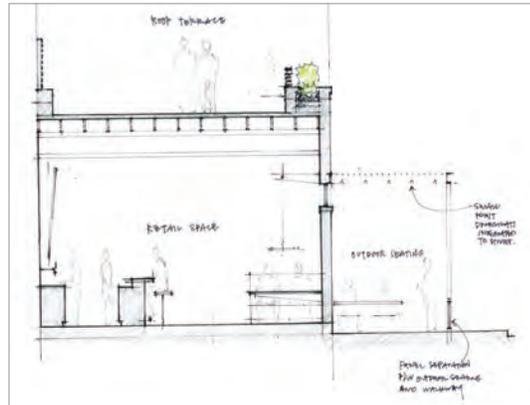


▲ Existing historic building at 153 South White Street

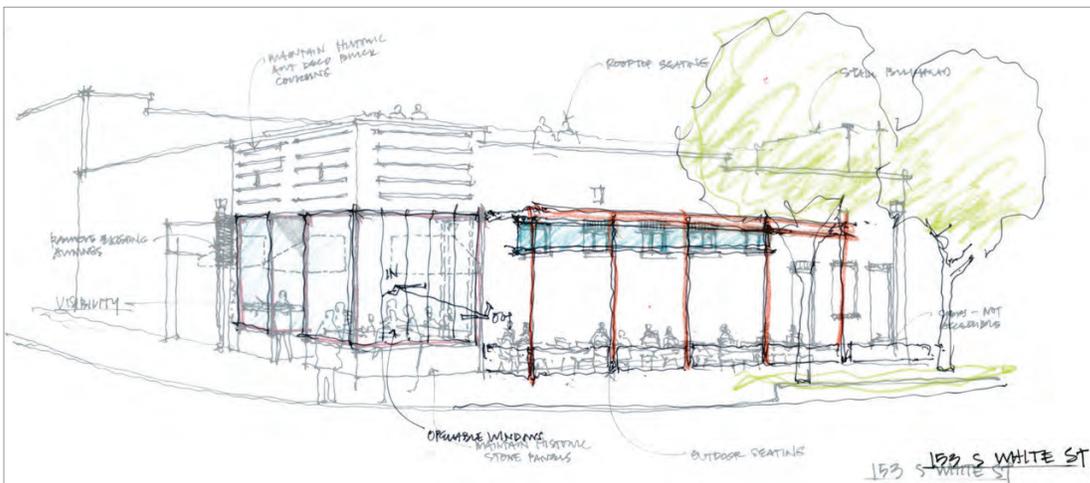
**RECOMMENDATION 9G:**  
Encourage the revitalization of 153 South White Street through strategic renovations.



▲ Site plan depicting visual prominence on White Street (Brad Burns, Gensler)



▲ Section view of concept — from White Street (Brad Burns, Gensler)



▲ The proposed concept to adaptively reuse the historic building includes outdoor seating, restoring storefront windows and installing a rooftop patio. (Brad Burns, Gensler)

## 9.2 Additional Opportunities

**More**  
COSTLY – TIME INTENSIVE – INTENSE IMPACT

**Range of**

9.2 Additional Opportunities



### TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART INSTALLATION

- » large scale, hangs over White Street or a portion of the street
- » potentially involves commissioning a public artist & funds to do so
- » complicated engineering, planning & coordinating
- » public safety concerns
- » grand scale impact, memorable, iconic
- » longer-term planning & project management



### TEMPORARY INTERSECTION OR PLAZA TREATMENT

- » large scale, high impact
- » potential locations: White & Jones, White & Owen, Town Hall Plaza
- » potentially involves commissioning a public artist & funds to do so
- » complicated design, planning & coordinating
- » grand scale impact, memorable, iconic
- » longer-term planning & project management
- » potential to become permanent, or a rotating exhibit
- » community involvement



### “OPEN STREETS” FESTIVALS

[openstreetsproject.org](http://openstreetsproject.org)

- » large scale, high impact
- » close down select connected streets in Renaissance Area
- » complicated planning & coordinating
- » grand scale impact, memorable
- » public safety concerns
- » longer-term planning & project management
- » potential to occur annually, or even more often
- » extreme range of programming opportunities
- » community involvement
- » resources available at [openstreetsproject.org](http://openstreetsproject.org)

#### RECOMMENDATION 9H:

Create a master list of opportunities and seek civic organizations to partner with in order to test a range of opportunities using tactical techniques.

# Opportunities

Less  
COSTLY – TIME INTENSIVE – INTENSE IMPACT



## CREATE AN ICONIC MOBILE ELEMENT

- » small scale, very visible
- » could function as seating, or vending, wide range of potential uses
- » small entrepreneurs can use for vending
- » less complicated planning & coordinating
- » fun, whimsical & memorable
- » needs long-term project management



## BUILD A "BEFORE I DIE WALL"

- » small scale, very visible
- » high level of community involvement
- » could help to fill a blank wall
- » less complicated planning & coordinating
- » fun, whimsical & memorable
- » needs long-term project management
- » cleaning, supplying of chalk over time



## YARN BOMBING

- » highly visible
- » high level of community involvement
- » low cost
- » less complicated planning & coordinating
- » fun, whimsical & memorable
- » needs some project management
- » cost of yarn
- » could take place on street trees & light posts



## GUERRILLA GARDENING

- » downtown beautification
- » high level of community involvement
- » low cost
- » less complicated planning & coordinating
- » use low maintenance plants
- » needs some project management
- » maintenance of planted areas over time
- » opportunity for lots of small groups

## 9.3 General Practices



▲ *Bike corral — Ann Arbor, MI*



▲ *Bike parking and signage — Oakland, CA*

### 9.3.1 Bicycle Parking

Wake Forest wants to become a more pedestrian and bike-friendly town. The provision of bicycle parking areas and bike racks is essential in accomplishing this goal. Bike racks can be whimsical and artsy, even implemented as public art projects. Standard bike racks should compliment other furnishings in downtown, and the style should provide a two point connection for cyclists so that bikes are parked parallel to the road when locked.

### 9.3.2 Benches & Movable Seating

Wake Forest has some bench seating in downtown, but seating should be a more prominent piece of the downtown streetscape that will add to the walkability and pedestrian-friendly character. Benches can be colorful and artistic at times, adding to downtown’s visual interest.

Movable seating is a very flexible option that is being used more regularly in downtowns. Restaurants often provide this type of seating for their patrons; however, the Town should consider placing movable seating in other public spaces and various areas within the downtown. The minimum width of a sidewalk to accommodate comfortable outdoor seating is fourteen feet from curb to building face. Most sidewalks on White Street in downtown Wake Forest are approximately twelve feet in width. Thus, any potential seating areas will not be as deep as an ideal sidewalk width would allow, though narrow bistro-style seating could work. Over time, as other streets are improved, additional widening can be accommodated.

**RECOMMENDATION 9I:**  
Layer the downtown environment incrementally with additional furnishings, lighting and landscaping.



▲ *Artistic bench — Detroit, MI*



▲ *Movable seating — Charlotte, NC*

### 9.3.3 Seasonal Color

Planter baskets should be utilized on the street lights to add vertical color. Additional container plantings placed near benches and at corners would help to soften the environment downtown and add visual interest. New fabrication techniques also make container plantings lower maintenance by utilizing self-watering techniques.

### 9.3.4 Trash & Recycling

Patrons have come to expect recycling services in downtown environments and combination trash & recycling receptacles are becoming commonplace in urban settings. Receptacle design should coordinate with the styling of the benches.

### 9.3.5 Lighting

String lights can be placed in street trees, or over White Street to add ambiance and charm.



▲ Varied use of seasonal color — Blacksburg, VA



▲ Solar powered recycling and trash compactors — Charlotte, NC



▲ Combined recycling and trash receptacle — Durham, NC



▲ Year-round string lights in street trees — Albemarle, NC



▲ String lights give ambiance to public space — Davidson, NC



▲ *With the increasing ubiquity of mobile devices, public Wi-Fi is becoming an essential tool in creating great downtowns.*

**9.3.6 Wi-Fi**

Wi-Fi, or Wireless Fidelity, enables wireless access to the internet. Many communities throughout the country are equipping their downtowns with Wi-Fi technologies creating what is known as a “Hot Spot” or Wi-Fi Zone. Within these zones, internet users are able to connect to the world wide web at a very high rate of speed without the hassle of cable connections.

Industry experts estimate it costs only a few thousand dollars to establish a Wi-Fi Zone if a fiber infrastructure is already in place. Additional costs will involve maintenance of the network/zone and an annual internet connection fee. Coverage for a Wi-Fi Zone typically encompasses a few city blocks.

The Town of Wake Forest should establish a Wi-Fi Zone throughout the heart of the Renaissance Area, at a minimum. This technology is recognized as a valuable economic development tool enabling many professionals the ability to work remotely while enjoying a cup of coffee or a sandwich from one of the numerous restaurants or coffee shops in the downtown. With the increasing ubiquity of mobile devices, this technology would also make the Renaissance Area more attractive to a wide range of potential visitors.

In the near-term, the Town of Wake Forest, should research the logistical aspects associated with establishing a Wi-Fi Zone within downtown Wake Forest. Partnerships between the Town, local utility departments, and area businesses may be formed to help fund and maintain a Wi-Fi Zone.

**RECOMMENDATION 9J:**  
**Research best practices in public Wi-Fi program implementation and management and subsequently implement public Wi-Fi in the Renaissance Area.**



▲ *Wi-Fi is widely is recognized as a valuable economic development tool attracting users by enabling them to work remotely or leisurely browse the internet.*

### 9.3.7 Public Restrooms

Public restroom facilities could be a welcome amenity to visitors of the Renaissance Area. The Town of Wake Forest could research various options for providing at least one high quality, but temporary restroom facility to the core of the Renaissance Area. The Town should also engage downtown stakeholders and businesses to determine the need for such facilities.

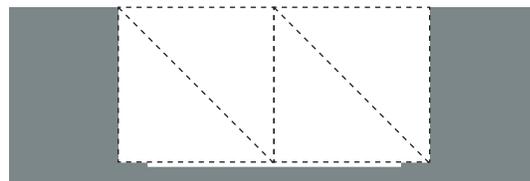
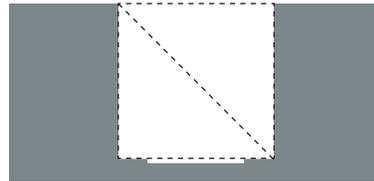


▲ High quality temporary mobile public toilet. Source: [www.standartgrup.com/en/](http://www.standartgrup.com/en/)

### 9.3.8 Spatial Enclosure

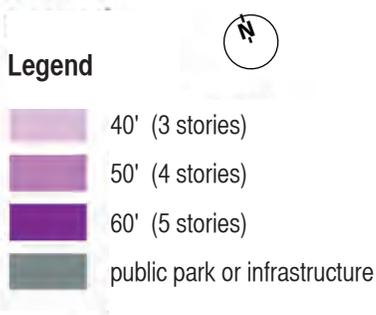
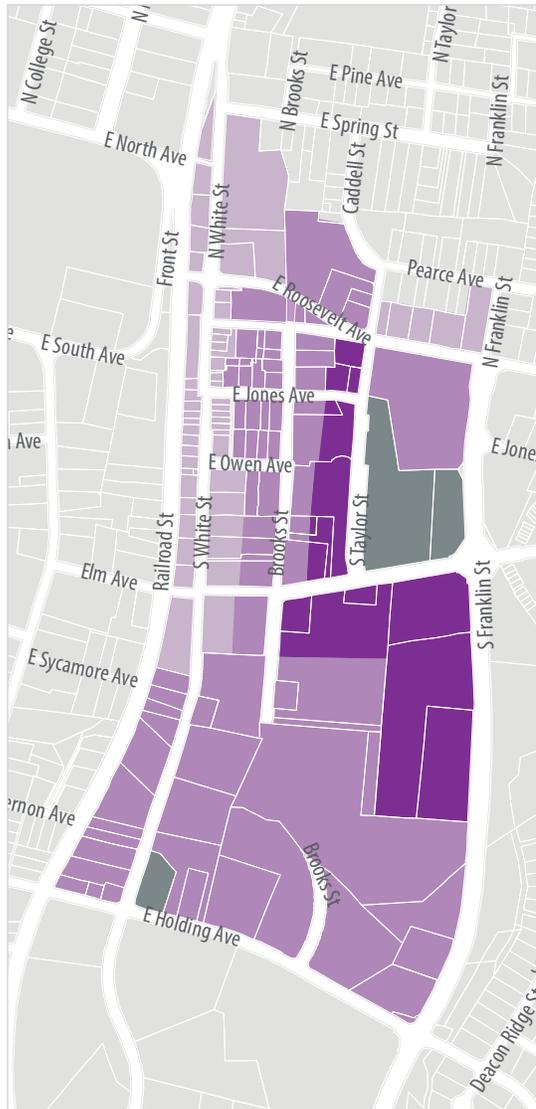
Spatial enclosure is an outdoor room that is created by building facades facing each other on opposite sides of the street and the street and sidewalk space between them. Establishing and controlling an appropriate spatial enclosure is an essential element of creating a great sense of place and a successful downtown (see Section 2.1).

Downtown Wake Forest's most direct example of good spatial enclosure exists on White Street just south of the intersection with Jones Street. The built environment on each side of White Street is approximately 30 feet in height while the width of the public realm (street & sidewalks) between them is 60 feet, creating a ratio of spatial enclosure of 1:2.



▲ A spatial enclosure ratio of 1:1 (top diagram) or 1:2 (bottom diagram) is ideal for downtown main streets to make an excellent sense of place possible.

**RECOMMENDATION 9K:**  
Add ideal spatial enclosure ratios to the Unified Development Ordinance.



### 9.3.9 Ideal Building Height

Building facades play an important role in creating a sense of place through spatial enclosure, as discussed in the previous section. Short one story buildings set back from the street provide no spatial enclosure and therefore create no sense of place. As previously mentioned, good spatial enclosure occurs on White Street near the intersection with Jones Street where buildings 30' tall face each other on opposite sides of the 60' wide street and sidewalk zone. Following an ideal spatial enclosure ratio of 1:1, buildings could be as tall as 60' on White Street. However, they would potentially overshadow the existing historic buildings that are no more than 40' tall. Instead, an ideal building height along White Street is one that relates well to the existing historic character, 3 stories or about 40' tall. But, taller buildings are more appropriate on other streets, like Brooks and Taylor. For example, Town Hall is some 50–60' tall on the Taylor Street side. Brooks and Taylor are both streets with general widths of about 60'. Future building heights of 5 stories on both sides would create an ideal spatial enclosure ratio on both streets and create a higher quality sense of place. The diagram to the left illustrates ideal future building heights for much of the Renaissance Area. Notably, the terrain slopes down significantly from White Street east to Brooks Street, Taylor Street and Franklin Street. This slope in terrain allows for taller buildings that would not overshadow the shorter historic buildings on White Street.

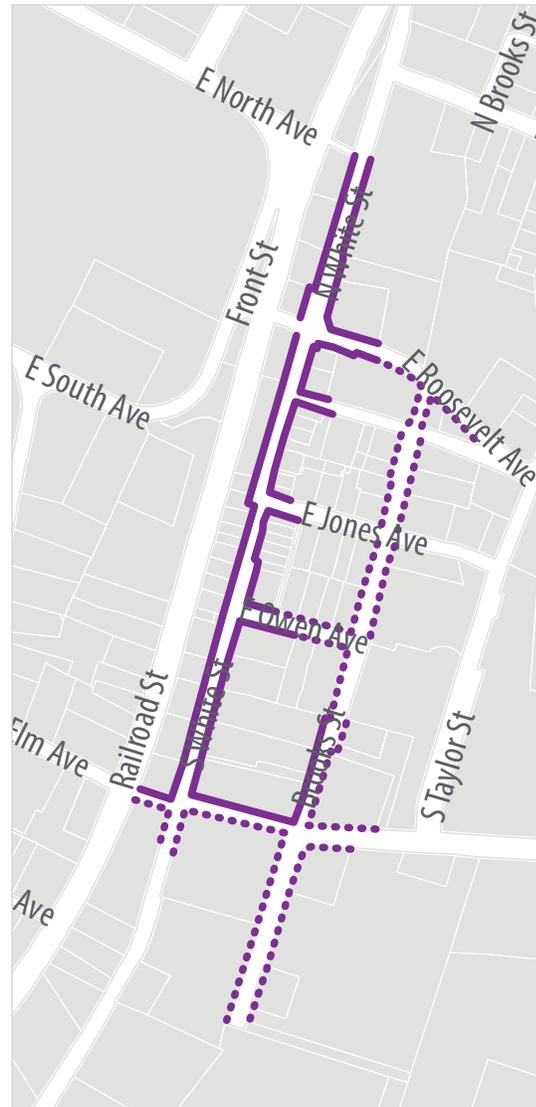
**RECOMMENDATION 9L:**  
 Amend the Unified Development Ordinance to better achieve ideal building heights.

### 9.3.10 Shopfront Overlay Extension

The Town of Wake Forest currently has an ordinance that regulates the design of the first floor in newly constructed buildings along certain street frontages. The Required Shopfront Overlay ordinance states that all new development along the “designated street frontage must provide one of the following Private Frontages at sidewalk level along the entire length of the frontage:

1. Shopfront & Awning,
2. Gallery, or
3. Arcade.”

In order to realize a primary goal of this plan, to connect the commercial energy on White Street to the same that exists at Renaissance Plaza, retail shopfronts should also be required in new development along certain frontages not currently designated in the existing ordinance. The diagram to the right shows the existing street frontages where the current ordinance applies as well as additional frontages that should be designated in an extension to the existing overlay district through an amended ordinance.



#### Legend

-  Frontages in existing shopfront overlay
-  Frontages in proposed extended overlay

#### RECOMMENDATION 9M:

Amend the existing Required Shopfront Overlay District to include additional frontages.

# 9.4 Case Study: Parklets

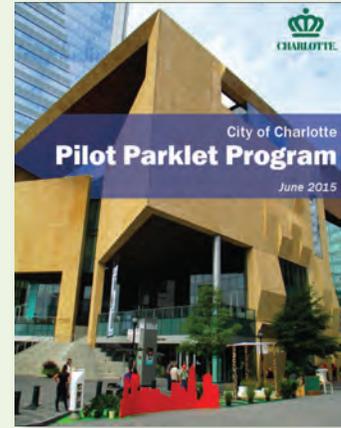
## Best Practices



▲ San Francisco started the parklet movement and leads the way with the gold standard in parklet manuals.



▲ Seattle also has one of the best parklet guides that is easy to follow and very informative



▲ Charlotte began its parklet program in 2015 and attempted to use lessons learned from other cities with more established programs.

## Cost

► Temporary parklets can be constructed for under \$200, but more permanent ones require more design, funding and permitting. Seattle's guide gives a range of examples.

24' long, 1% slope

Design	donated
Materials/Construction	\$17,000
Permits	\$1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>

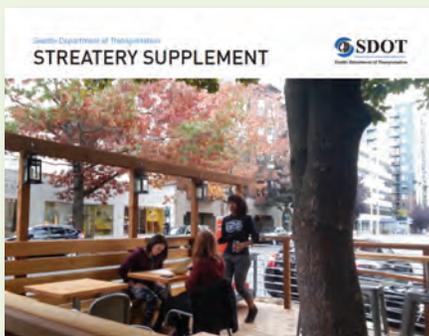
23' long, 8% slope

Design	\$4,000
Materials/Construction	\$19,000
Permits	\$1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$24,000</b>

116' long, 4% slope

Design	donated
Materials/Construction	\$90,000
Permits	\$1,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$91,000</b>

## Other Similar Projects and Programs



◀ Seattle also has guidelines for parklets used as outdoor cafes, called "Streateries."

► Los Angeles created People Street, a program that invites the public to build their own public spaces.



## Charlotte's Pilot Parklets

Charlotte built two pilot parklets adjacent to a popular urban park in uptown. They were designed by architecture students at UNC Charlotte in a collaborative effort with Charlotte DOT and other uptown stakeholders. They cost approximately \$8,000 each and were funded by Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation who also maintains them as part of the adjacent Romare Bearden Park. Officials have noted that while they could have been built for less, they wanted to use high-quality adjustable construction materials to permit their relocation as necessary.

Charlotte considered standards and precedents from a number of other cities including San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Seattle when formulating their program. In doing so, they identified three major points for the placement and construction of new parklets and creative placemaking initiatives:

**Maintenance.** Who keeps them looking nice? How does the City handle complaints if they fall into disrepair? The City doesn't have the resources to maintain many parklets, so third party groups, like the county parks department, Charlotte Center City Partners, adjacent business owners and neighborhood groups will have to take responsibility for them.

**Liability.** Who's property are they? How are they insured and what happens if the property is damaged? Charlotte included language in their agreements that indicates the applicants are liable for any damages, and they must show a certificate of insurance in their application materials.

**Setting a Precedent.** It's important to provide guidance about the locations where parklets are appropriate as well as a community's design expectations. Like public plazas and parks, parklets are highly visible and should be very useful. After all, the goal is to reclaim space from a parked car to give back to people. They must be attractive and well-designed, but the standards need to be flexible enough for the program to be accessible to all.

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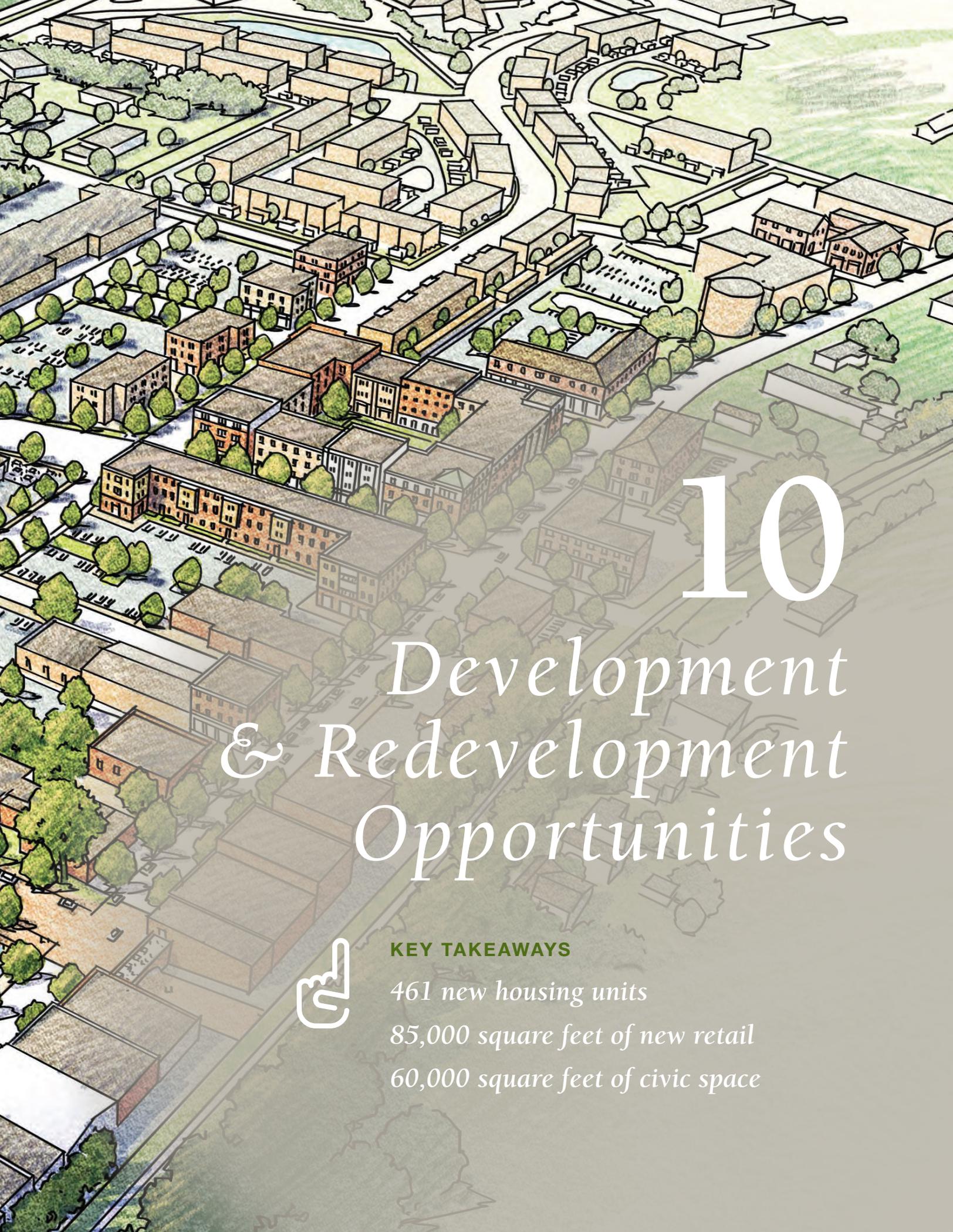
## Parking Day 2014 and 2015 in Uptown Charlotte



Parking Day is an annual event that started in San Francisco as a way to bring attention to the importance of public space by taking over on-street parking spaces and replacing them with little parks. Charlotte demonstrated Parking Day along a 1 mile stretch of its main street, Tryon Street, in uptown in 2014 and 2015, turning about 10 spots to parklets for a day. Local designers were invited to participate and compete as teams to design each parklet differently. They were encouraged to use found, reusable and recyclable materials. Judges toured each parklet and voted on the best one while the public also had opportunities to weigh in. While Tryon Street is a handsome and pedestrian-friendly street today, layering in the richness and detail of parklets along its length provided a further encouragement to think differently about a city's right-of-way.

*Aerial view, looking south, showing the potential buildout of the Renaissance Area by 2040 guided by the recommendations in this plan*





# 10

## Development & Redevelopment Opportunities



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

461 new housing units

85,000 square feet of new retail

60,000 square feet of civic space

# 10 Development & Redevelopment Opportunities



## 10.1 AIA Downtown Design Workshop

The Renaissance Area has several properties that represent opportunities for revitalization and/or redevelopment, many of which are well known to the residents of Wake Forest. In an effort to generate positive ideas for the future of such properties important to downtown, several Town leaders came together and initiated a Downtown Design Workshop in October 2015. This event occurred prior to the public design charrette that helped guide the creation of this plan. The consultant team for the Town reviewed and incorporated the ideas of the AIA workshop into the recommendations of the Renaissance Plan Update.

### Properties Analyzed

- » **DAB property** – 208 Elm Avenue
- » **Wright property** – 430 S. White Street
- » **Stinnett property** – 325 S. White Street
- » **Fidelity Bank property** – 321 S. White Street & 223 Owen Avenue
- » **Perry property (Barber Shop)** – 153 S. White Street
- » **Victorian Square (Johnson property)** – 104 S. White Street
- » **Cameron Park (Johnson property)** – 101, 103 & 107 S. White Street
- » **Jay Street property (Shopping Center)** – 150 N. White Street
- » **Blinson property (WF Auto Care)** – 303 Roosevelt Avenue
- » **Brooks Street properties** – 112, 116 & 122 S. Brooks Street
- » **Tarangelo property (LaForesta)** – 203 S Brooks Street

### Local Experts & Designers

- » Michael Stevenson – Kling Stubbins
- » Erin Lewis – in situ
- » Albert McDonald, Anthony Garcia – Clark Nexsen
- » Robby Johnson, Taylor Medlin – RAC
- » Frank Harmon
- » Tina Govan
- » Brad Burns – Gensler
- » Julieta Sherk – NCSU
- » Louis Cherry
- » Matt Hale
- » Harry Mitchell

#### WORKSHOP DETAILS

**HELD:** Saturday, October 10, 2015

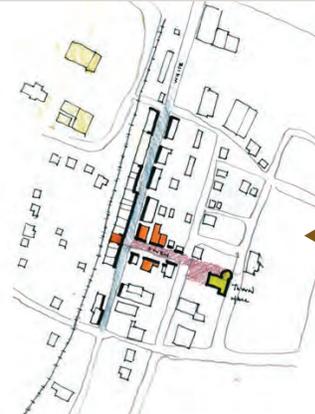
**BRAINCHILD OF:** Michael Welton

**SPONSORED BY:** WFD, Inc.

**PARTICIPANTS:** 13 architects, landscape architects and engineers

**PROPERTIES:** 11 properties analyzed

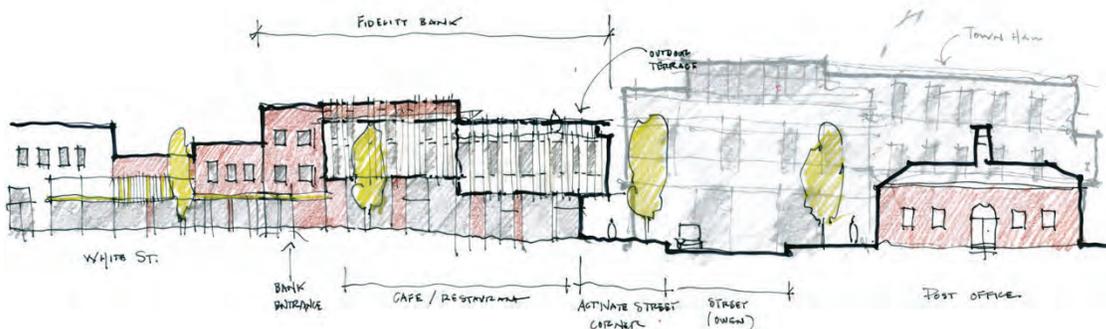
**Fidelity Bank Property** ROBBY JOHNSON, TAYLOR MEDLIN – RAC



◀ Importance of Owen & White

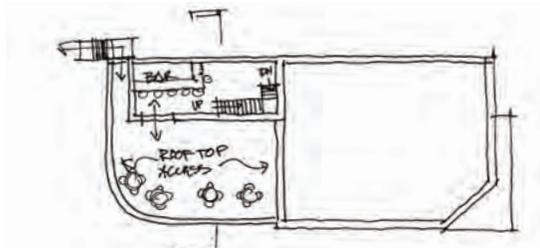


▲ Site Plan proposing mixed-use development including a new bank and retail/restaurant uses activating the street

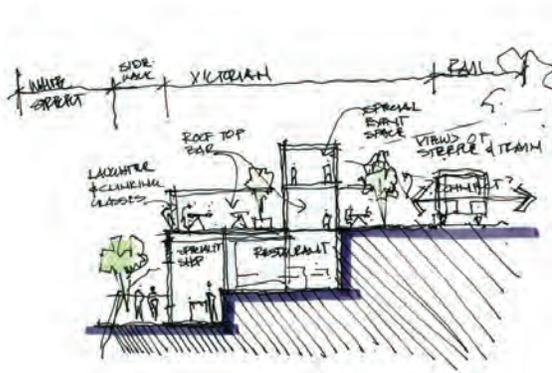


▲ White Street elevation

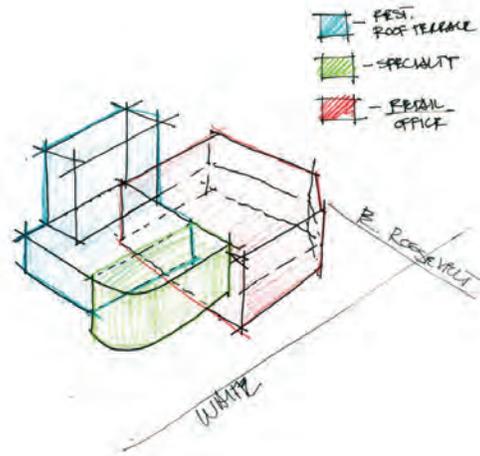
**Victorian Square (Johnson property)** ALBERT MCDONALD – CLARK NEXSEN



▲ Rooftop plan



▲ Section view from west



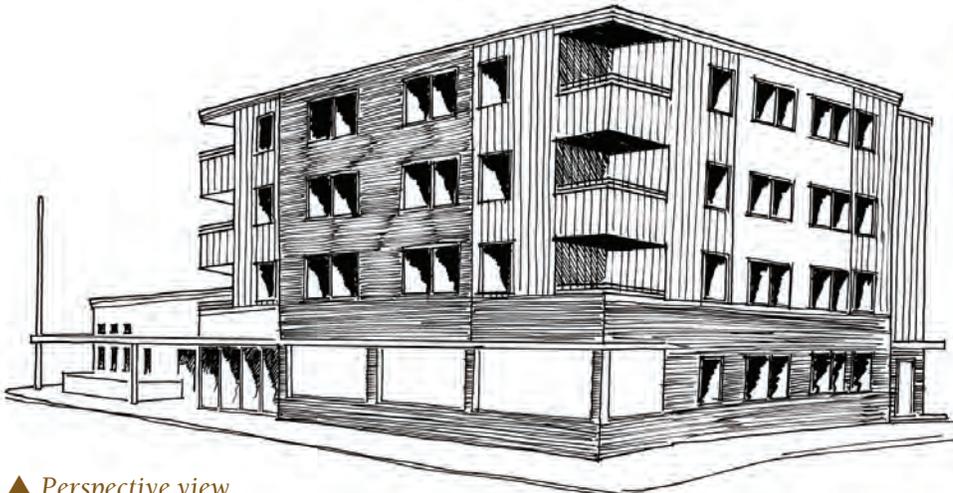
▲ Mixed-use diagram



▲ Perspective view proposing renovation and restoration of existing building

**Tarangelo Property – La Foresta** MATT HALE

▲ Site Plan proposing a new boutique hotel development connecting to the existing La Foresta



▲ Perspective view

## 10.2 Long Term Development Opportunities

### 10.2.1 Master Plan

Downtown Wake Forest is currently a collection of disparate parts that are functioning well, but would be at their best if they were better connected and working together. The historic core area and Town Hall anchor the center of the Renaissance Area, but the vibrancy is fragmented. By creating a festival street on Owen, focusing on infill development, and targeting tactical projects, the fragmented parts can be connected together.

What makes a downtown thrive? In short, it is the presence of people — people working, people shopping, people relaxing, and people eating — that is the secret sauce to a truly successful downtown. We have identified opportunities for new office buildings and retail to be developed mostly in the central and southern parts of the Renaissance Area. But, perhaps above all else, we must have more people living downtown. We've identified opportunities for approximately 1,000–1,200 new residents to live within a 5–8 minute walk of the historic core area. Residents walk around their neighborhood, activating the street and attract others to do the same. They may not be the entire market for a new women's clothing store or restaurant, but they will often be the dedicated supporters who will choose to buy local instead of driving elsewhere.

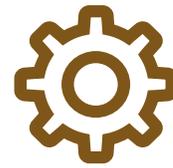
### 10.2.2 Potential Buildout/Infill Calculations



461  
housing units



60,000 sf  
civic



expand senior center  
and town hall + construct  
community center



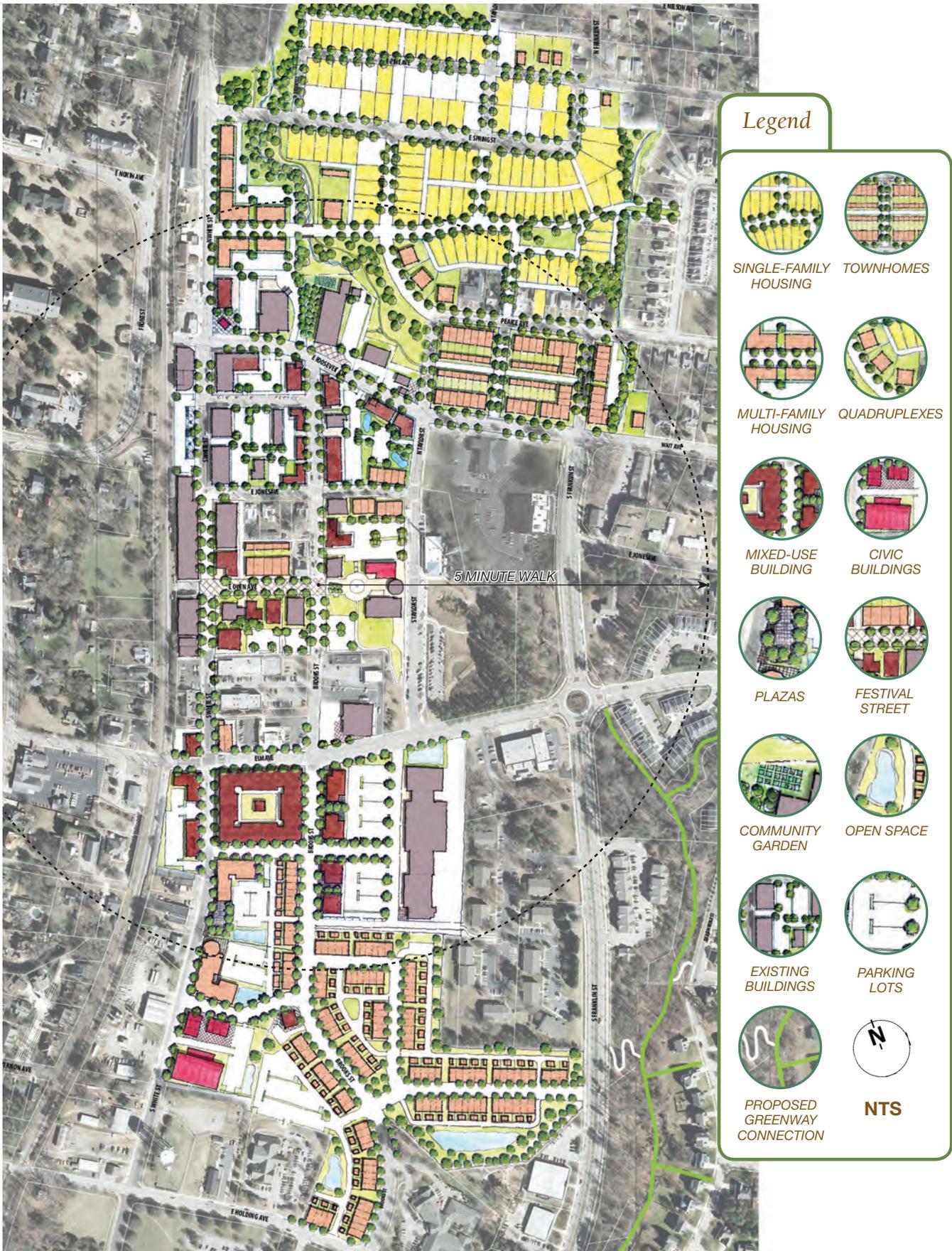
85,000 sf  
retail



16–24 room  
boutique hotel



93,000 sf  
office



▲ Figure 10.2: Renaissance Master Plan (2016)

### 10.2.3 Northern Area

#### Connect the neighborhood to downtown

There are several vacant lots, flag lots and parcels that are irregularly platted north of Roosevelt Avenue and Pearce Avenue. This scenario provides an opportunity to repair the disconnected and oversized blocks. Using a new street running east-west between White Street and Highgate Circle, more walkable block sizes are created between Spring Street and Pearce Avenue. In addition, smaller parcels can accommodate more density and potentially create a setting for more affordable housing.

#### Infill Opportunities

Roosevelt Avenue is a major road leading into downtown Wake Forest: while previously impaired by excessive traffic, the re-routing of NC 98 has made this street dramatically more livable. As a result, vacant or underutilized parcels along Roosevelt Avenue are now ripe for denser housing types, such as townhomes and quadruplexes, on these parcels. There are also some commercial properties that can be renovated and reimagined as new mixed-use opportunities or new multi-family housing developments. These strategies can create a great

deal of new housing on the north end, some of which can be workforce housing, within a five minute walk of the White Street commercial core, as well as provide new opportunities for mixed-use and adaptive re-use development.

**RECOMMENDATION 10A:**  
 Create a finer grain street and block network in the northern area of downtown and infill with a range of housing.

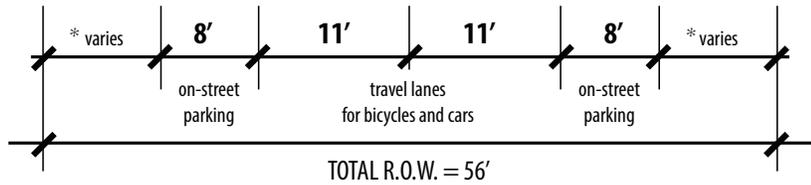


▲ Northern Area development and redevelopment opportunities

▼ Proposed improvements for Roosevelt Avenue include the addition of sharrow markings and on-street parking as private development begins to address the street. Street trees, container plantings and decorative light poles enhance the sidewalks in this corridor.



\*Ideal pedestrian zone for this section of Roosevelt Avenue is 6 feet for trees and furnishings plus 8 feet of sidewalk for a total of 14 feet.



▼ Proposed housing infill on Roosevelt Avenue



▼ Existing conditions on Roosevelt Avenue



### 10.2.3.A Reimagine a Local Garage

Roosevelt Avenue, once a busy commercial corridor, has seen all but a fraction of its traffic transfer to the new NC 98. As a result, many of the auto-dependent uses have lost a lot of their former patrons who now seek the convenience of the highway.

Part of the transformation of Roosevelt Avenue will be in the public realm — the streetscape — but, the other part will be accomplished by encouraging the adaptive re-use of the few interesting older buildings that can be revitalized, renovated and re-tenanted with a fresh approach to a more human-scaled street.

One such building, pictured below, is an old warehouse/garage/auto parts establishment. While auto service and auto parts businesses are very important to the retail makeup of a town, they often prefer to be in higher traffic locations rather than in a walkable, vibrant entertainment area. This interesting building could instead be repurposed as a small market, restaurant, brewery or other specialty retail or restaurant use and would have profound effects on the revitalization of Roosevelt Avenue.



**RECOMMENDATION 10B:**  
Transform the public and private realm of Wait/Roosevelt Avenue.

◀ Existing garage on Roosevelt Avenue



▲ Garage building reimagined as a vibrant brewery, beer garden and market

### 10.2.3.B Heading West on Wait/Roosevelt Avenue

During the winter months when the leaves have fallen from the trees, the view of town as you enter along Wait/Roosevelt Avenue is spectacular. The SEBTS steeple rises above the buildings at the northern edge of the historic core and is a memorable landmark at the top of the hill.

The current development pattern along this stretch does not add to the captivating view beyond, as there are several vacant properties and the wide street of asphalt dominates the image. But, there are opportunities for infill development, redevelopment and adaptive reuse buildings here. New residents would have a short, pleasant walk from the north side of Wait/Roosevelt Avenue to a number of new mixed-use buildings along this corridor and a few blocks further into the historic core. Development is envisioned to be mainly 2–3 stories and could consist of shops and restaurants on the ground floor with offices or residential uses above.

► Existing Wait/Roosevelt Avenue looking west



▲ Reimagined Wait/Roosevelt Avenue with new mixed-use development and pedestrian/bicycle-friendly streetscape

## 10.2.4 Central Area | Historic Core

### 10.2.4.A Close a portion of Wait Avenue and Consolidate the Block

Wait Avenue between Brooks Street and Roosevelt Avenue is not very useful or advantageous to the downtown street network. Currently, there is very little traffic and it creates an awkward triangular parcel and intersection at Roosevelt Avenue. The closing of that portion of Wait Avenue would create a larger block that could accommodate a cohesive redevelopment and contribute in a positive way to downtown.

### 10.2.4.B Encourage Infill and Redevelopment along Owen Avenue

Infill development will be encouraged on Owen Avenue to provide new residential and mixed-use development along its edges. Notably, the redevelopment of the Fidelity Bank property at the corner of Owen Avenue and White Street will be a catalytic project that would add vibrancy to a key intersection in the historic core. That property has also been identified as a potential location to accommodate a new sprayground public space (See Section 8.2). Additionally, initial visioning and conceptual design work was done for this property during the AIA Downtown Design Workshop (See Section 10.1).



▲ Central Area | Historic Core development and redevelopment opportunities

### 10.2.4.C Infill on White Street

White Street from Elm Avenue to Roosevelt Avenue is the historic heart of downtown Wake Forest. The buildings that front White Street on both sides from Roosevelt Avenue to The Cotton Company building fill the blocks with a consistent, attractive urban street edge (with the exception of a large public parking lot north of Jones Avenue on the west side of the street). Maintaining a consistent and attractive street edge is critical in the downtown core, especially in districts that offer retail and restaurant uses. Several studies have been completed that assert pedestrians are unlikely to walk past a vacant building or vacant lot to get to some active use further down the street. Thus, it is critical that infill development is encouraged on vacant lots in downtown, especially in this stretch of White Street.



**RECOMMENDATION 10D:**  
Encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized lots along White Street.

◀ Existing underutilized building and vacant lot on White Street



▲ Potential infill development and reimagined existing building on White Street looking north

## 10.2.5 Southern Area

### 10.2.5.A Large-tract Development Opportunities

Several large parcels, mainly along South White Street south of Elm Avenue, are ripe for redevelopment. Their size and location make them suitable for a wide range of development types, but we envision a mix of multi-family over retail, townhomes and civic buildings.

### 10.2.5.B Connect Senior Center & Civic Hub to Downtown – Brooks Street Walkability

The Senior Center at Brooks Street and East Holding Avenue is visually disconnected from downtown, but it is only a 6–8 minute walk. As Brooks Street is planned to connect through from East Holding Avenue to Elm Avenue, we must ensure that the public streetscape and the frontages of private development contribute to a highly walkable street. Brooks Street will be a very important street as it is redeveloped over time.

### 10.2.5.C Build on Activity at Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center

The Renaissance Plaza Shopping Center is one of the most active environments in downtown, but there will be a need to replace the unsightly and underperforming parking lots along the Brooks Street edge with mixed-use outparcel development. This will be key to ensuring the shopping center remains relevant and vibrant as more housing is developed within walking distance.



▲ Southern Area development and redevelopment opportunities

- Existing Elm Avenue (Brooks Street to White Street)



- ▲ Vision for the future of Elm Avenue at Renaissance Plaza, looking west at White/Elm intersection

#### 10.2.5.D Elm & White Infill

The various parcels around Elm Avenue and White Street represent what was once a suburbanization of the downtown core. Elm, constructed with enough asphalt to accommodate a five lane suburban collector is surrounded by auto-oriented uses. And yet, this area represents the greatest opportunity to create a truly walkable, urban neighborhood with a variety of housing choices and at a density that makes it supportive of a thriving downtown.

Located at the bottom of the hill from the historic core, this area can visually accommodate 4-story, mixed-use buildings without towering over the existing structures of noted character up the hill on White Street. With a vibrant commercial and access to a number of key civic amenities including the library, schools, and the senior center, all within walking distance, if there is to be any density anywhere in Wake Forest, this area is best suited to gracefully accept it.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the Town's desire for a commuter rail station to connect it to the greater region at some point in the future. To do so requires either a sufficient supportive density or a large parking structure for park and ride use. Only one of these is supportive of a vibrant downtown — greater density — and it can be done with a minimal amount of imposition on the surrounding community.

Lastly, higher density housing, particularly apartments and townhomes are much more responsive to the long term trends facing housing markets in the next twenty years. They appeal to two ends of the demographic spectrum, those under 30 and those over 65 who collectively represent more than 80 of the household growth in the US. And it is these two groups, each of whom will have a dramatically reduced need for private auto usage, that continue to drive the demand for more urban housing.

Density along Elm Avenue drives demand for a vibrant Downtown, it serves the growing population market needs, it provides sufficient value to replace the aging suburban development, and it does so in a location that is contextually appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION 10G:**  
Encourage redevelopment and install streetscape improvements at the intersection of White and Elm to connect White Street to Brooks Street.

► Existing vacant lot at White Street and Elm Avenue



▲ Enhanced gateway intersection to downtown at White Street and Elm Avenue, alive with pedestrian activity and new infill development

## 10.3 Downtown 2016 vs. Downtown 2040



▲ Aerial view of downtown Wake Forest looking south (2016)

*What will downtown Wake Forest look like in 2040?*



▲ Aerial view of the 2040 Vision for downtown Wake Forest





# II

## Implementation Strategies



### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- New housing & active ground floor uses 10 specific projects to tackle first*
- Organized implementation matrix*
- Attract new user groups to downtown*

# 11 Implementation Strategies



## 11.1 Five Year Goals

There are several projects that Wake Forest can start working on immediately. Some may take longer to accomplish than others, but here are the aspirational goals that we want to accomplish within 5 years.



4

### Create a real parking problem in downtown.

Within five years' time, downtown should be so popular that people have decided to Uber or ride a bicycle to downtown because every parking spot is full! This reality would indicate that all of the other goals have been met, and Wake Forest is the place to be! The sidewalks are bustling with patrons and families coming to spend money and experience small town urban living at its very best.

### Downtown is THE address in Wake Forest!

We will have achieved success when advertising a home for sale near downtown commands a significant premium regardless of whether it is located in the historic district. Investment in undervalued neighborhoods, construction of new high quality housing, and rent premiums for commercial space over the suburban competition will mean that we have made downtown the most sought after address in Wake Forest.

### Create a continuous pedestrian experience from Roosevelt to Elm.

The historic core of the downtown will be a park once and walk environment — an area that is best experienced as a pedestrian. The gaps in sidewalks and the urban fabric will be eliminated in favor of a lively, safe, and well-connected downtown. Downtown will be a place for people, on foot or on a bicycle, where cars are tolerated but tamed.

### Attract 150 new housing units to the downtown.

In addition to those that are under construction, the downtown will attract an additional 150 new homes, bringing the total new resident count — citizens who walk the streets and shop local — to more than 500. These new people will drive additional demand for more of everything that we value today including great restaurants, specialty shops, and neighborhood convenience goods.

Now...

1

### 50% of inactive White Street frontage converted to retail/restaurant use (*specifically, add five new bars/restaurants*).

In five years we will have converted half of our vacant and underutilized storefronts along White Street to much more productive shopping, restaurant, and entertainment venues. Ideally, we will have attracted five new bars (taprooms, taverns, wine bars) and restaurants to leverage the current success of our dining options into a true destination for the entire community. This infilling of activity will not only increase our economic activity but it will create a continuous pedestrian experience that is the envy of the entire Triangle.

## 11.2 Top 10 Projects in 5 Years

<p><b>1</b></p> <p><i>Install a parklet on White Street in front of the brewery</i></p> 	
<p><b>2</b></p> <p><i>Convert Owen Avenue to a shared festival street</i></p> 	
<p><b>3</b></p> <p><i>Light the bridge and create an iconic &amp; memorable gateway to downtown</i></p> 	
<p><b>4</b></p> <p><i>Close part of Wait Avenue and consolidate the block</i></p> 	
<p><b>5</b></p> <p><i>Implement a parking management program</i></p> 	

	<p><i>Build an interactive water feature</i></p>	<p>6</p>
	<p><i>Construct the Smith Creek greenway through downtown</i></p>	<p>7</p>
	<p><i>Build a playground</i></p>	<p>8</p>
	<p><i>Improve the Front Street intersection for pedestrians</i></p>	<p>9</p>
	<p><i>Enhance wayfinding and signage to direct visitors to and throughout downtown</i></p>	<p>10</p>



## 11.3 Management & Programming

Wake Forest Downtown Inc. (WFD) is a 501c3 that began in the mid-80s as a revitalization group. This organization put the MSD (Municipal Service District) in place, but in 2013, the Town decided to bring the director position in house and form the Downtown Development department. The group still follows the tenets of the Main Street America approach to downtown revitalization including economic vitality, design, organization and promotion. The local non-profit board (WFD) continues to advise the Town and volunteer their time in executing events. Programming is funded through sponsorships and budgeted through the Town including operating dollars to pay for advertising. A 2015 survey revealed that 99% of merchants believe their business has increased 50% because of events such as Art after Hours and Friday Night on White. The organization offers up to a \$15,000 match on \$30,000 projects and a \$7,500 match on \$15,000 projects.

Programming in downtown Wake Forest has certainly transformed over the past five years. What the urban core presently lacks in retail/restaurant drivers to downtown, the staff has tried to make up for with the quality and quantity of events in downtown.

### Hiring an Event Coordinator

These events are currently coordinated through the Downtown Development department. Per the recommendation in Chapter 8 (Section 8.4/Recommendation 8C), a new staff person dedicated solely to coordinating community events should be hired by the Town to free the director to focus on economic vitality and driving new business into downtown.

### Promote More Frequent, Smaller Events

Frequent smaller events tend to support the growth of downtown better than large once-a-year events like the Dirt Day celebration that attracts thousands of visitors to the downtown, but fails to support local merchants. On the contrary, recurring, smaller format events like Friday Night on White (inaugurated in 2016), provide activities that people and businesses come to expect and depend upon. They offer seasonally predictable experiences that people eagerly anticipate, much like the Renaissance Center offers movies/summer entertainment. Small events typically prove less disruptive than big events without requiring street closures and other strategic logistics. Additionally, they are short in

#### DOWNTOWN EVENTS

- » Mardi Gras
- » Friday Night on White
- » Meet in the Street
- » Lighting of Wake Forest
- » Music at Midday
- » Dirt Day
- » Downtown Holiday Open House
- » Wake Forest Community Christmas Dinner
- » Wake Forest Christmas Parade
- » Wake Forest Charity Car Show
- » Renaissance Centre Movies
- » State of the Town Address & Dinner
- » Art After Hours

duration and provide opportunities for the participants to eat or go shopping before or after the event.

As part of this smaller format programming, the plan recommends that multi-cultural events be included to diversify the potential user base. Inserting specific, one-time and “theme” events into the normal routine enlivens a program’s overall success by creating opportunities for participants to learn about different cultures, histories, and experiences within the program’s recurring cycle.

For instance, Friday Night on White could host a special “Latin Jazz” event one week and invite local or regional performers and vendors from the Hispanic community to showcase their talents and goods. In this way, multicultural events become educational community forums that foster exchange, dialogue, and celebration between different groups within a civic setting. This idea does not seek to exclude large events, which are generally limited to one per season, but emphasize the momentum generated by consistent, smaller initiatives. Also, smaller events should continue to use the range of public spaces found throughout the downtown area; however, the regularity of an individual event in one location like “Friday Night on White” makes for a reliable, consistent destination for the casual attendee.

### **Bring the Children Downtown**

The regular presence of children in the downtown promotes the value of this area for future generations and adds an unmistakable vibrancy. Children form relationships with places through their experiences. As such, it is important to program activities for children regularly in the downtown. Downtown Davidson, NC, programs an annual Halloween Parade. Beginning at 5 PM, more than a thousand children line

up on Main Street in their costumes and parade down Main Street and gather candy from the merchants. This event draws from all of the neighborhoods in the community (and many from outside the town) and is as much a social event for the adults as it is a candy-fest for the children. Seniors in the community set up chairs and enjoy the wide diversity of costumes for the one and a half hour event. After the parade, the restaurants are full of families who eat dinner before heading into the neighborhoods for the formal candy gathering. This relatively simple event requires very little effort in the way of logistics. Simple advertising in the Town’s newsletter and a notice in the school packets are all that might be necessary to kick off this type of activity. This event is a nice tie-in to the Halloween Spooktacular at Flaherty Park Community Center.

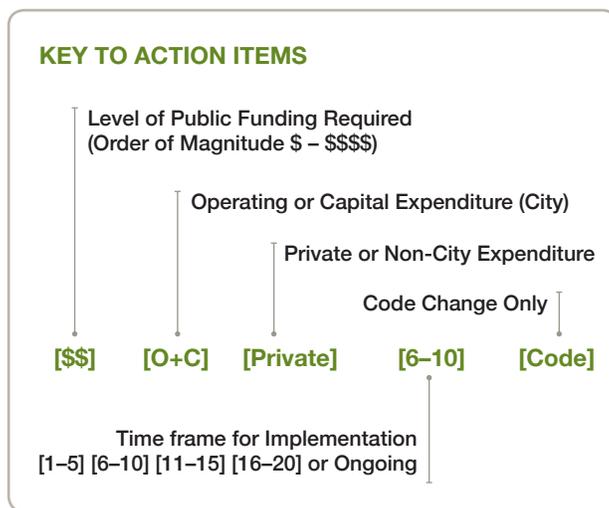
### **Bring the College Students Downtown**

While the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary is within walking distance of the core, the presence of over 3,000 students is not readily apparent in downtown. Recently, more students can be seen downtown, but that user group can be drawn to downtown more often through strategic programming and events marketed to their demographic.

**RECOMMENDATION 11A:**  
Promote more frequent, smaller events in downtown that are more seasonally predictable and recurring.

**RECOMMENDATION 11B:**  
Attract a broad array of user groups, specifically children and college students, to downtown through strategic programming.

## 11.4 Implementation Matrix



In order for the vision and recommendations to be achieved that are expressed in the Renaissance Plan Update, specific action items will need to be implemented by the Town of Wake Forest. Many of the action items seek to provide the conditions under which the vision can be achieved, by way of providing sensible land use regulation, necessary public investments, the development of appropriate programs and policies, encouraging catalyst projects and other actions.

The action items in the matrix relate to the recommendations found throughout the document. The funding is listed as an order of magnitude as way to evaluate the relative costs of one action over another. As a means of attempting to quantify these relative costs over the twenty year period, the table below summarizes an estimated range of cost values that may be used.

Order of Magnitude	Estimated Cost Range
\$	\$1 – \$50,000
\$\$	\$50,000 – \$250,000
\$\$\$	\$250,000 – \$1 million
\$\$\$\$	\$1 million+

The execution of the implementation steps will likely be phased and is subject to a variety of factors, which determine their timing. These include:

- » The availability of personnel and financial resources necessary to implement specific proposals;
- » Whether an implementation step is a necessary precursor to or component of the rational evaluation of a new development project;
- » The interdependence of the various implementation tasks, in particular, the degree to which implementing one item is dependent upon the successful completion of another item; and,
- » The relative severity of the challenge which a particular implementation task is designed to remedy.

In view of these factors, it is not possible to put forward a precise timetable for the various implementation items. The priority for implementation will be listed by the period in which items should be completed. Year 1–5 items and certain ongoing items are the highest priority while Year 16–20+ projects could be completed as resources allow.

Ref. Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	Ongoing	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
<b>5 Retail Strategies</b>												
5A	Use Retail Merchandising Units (RMUs) to provide additional inventory and demonstrate the viability of downtown Wake Forest.	81	\$	O+C	Public/Private		X	X				
5B	Convene the relevant stakeholders in a consensus-building exercise focused exclusively on how the Town can help facilitate new retail and create buzz about the area.	84	\$\$	O	Public/Private		X					
5C	The Town should try to become more actively involved in growing frequency of visitation among one particular (and sizable) subset of consumers.	86	\$	O	Public/Private	X						
5D	Use policy to require active ground floor uses based on the existing character and realistic aspirations for particular streets or areas.	87	\$	O	Public	X						X
5E	Embrace a market-driven approach to parking, with a focus on making more efficient use of existing resources and conditioning motorists to consider spaces a little further away from their destination.	88	\$	O+C	Public/Private	X						X
<b>6 Connect the Core</b>												
6A	Build on the identified centers of energy and ensure multi-modal connectivity between them.	92	\$	C	Public/Private	X						
6B*	Transform Owen Street into a festival street that connects the retail core to the civic core with a unique urban experience.	95	\$\$	C	Public/Private		X					
6C	Build the Downtown Connection greenway and add a connection from Deacon Ridge Street to Franklin Street at mid-block.	97	\$\$\$	O+C				X				
6D	Fill any identified gaps in the sidewalk network and construct new sidewalks where suggested.	100	\$\$\$	O+C				X				
6E	Continue to complete streetscape improvements throughout the Renaissance Area prioritizing those that improve safety.	102	\$\$\$									
<b>7 Manage the Cars</b>												
7A*	Implement both short and long term parking strategies with the overall goal of managing this public utility in the most efficient manner possible.	112	\$	O		X						
<b>8 Create a Destination</b>												
8A	Identify and implement an interactive civic space in downtown Wake Forest that attracts families through play and water.	120	\$\$\$	O+C				X				

\*Top 10 Projects in 5 Years

Ref. Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	Ongoing	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
8B	Develop a community art master plan which identifies opportunities for building murals, sculptures and other forms of creative thinking.	121	\$	O+C			X					
8C	Hire an event coordinator to manage, promote and execute Town related activities/festivals.	122	\$	O			X					
<b>9 Put People First</b>												
9A	Test outdoor dining at The Forks to add outdoor vibrancy and encourage pedestrian activity on Elm Avenue.	127	\$	C	Public/Private		X					
9B	Restripe Elm Avenue to include bike lanes to give the east side a dedicated bicycle facility connecting them to downtown.	128	\$	O			X					
9C*	Install a temporary parklet in the loading zone; upon evaluation of its success, consider enhanced permanent features for the space.	129	\$	C	Public/Private		X					
9D	Transform the intersection of Roosevelt and Front Street into a prominent gateway to downtown Wake Forest.	130	\$\$\$\$	C				X				
9E	Transform the pedestrian pathway across the rail line into an art walk to downtown Wake Forest.	131	\$	C				X				
9F*	Use interesting lighting techniques to make the bridge an iconic and memorable feature of downtown.	132	\$	O+C			X					
9G	Encourage the revitalization of 153 South White Street through strategic renovations.	133	\$	C	Public/Private		X					
9H	Create a master list of opportunities and seek civic organizations to partner with in order to test a range of opportunities using tactical techniques.	135	\$				X					
9I	Layer the downtown environment incrementally with additional furnishings, lighting and landscaping.	136	\$\$	C		X						
9J	Research best practices in public Wi-Fi program implementation and management and subsequently implement public Wi-Fi in the Renaissance Area.	138	\$	O+C	Public/Private		X					
9K	Add ideal spatial enclosure ratios to the Unified Development Ordinance.	139	\$	O			X					
9L	Amend the Unified Development Ordinance to better achieve ideal building heights.	140	\$	O			X					
9M	Amend the existing Required Shopfront Overlay District to include additional frontages.	141	\$	O			X					

\*Top 10 Projects in 5 Years

Ref. Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	Ongoing	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
<b>10 Development &amp; Redevelopment Opportunities</b>												
10A	Create a finer grain street and block network in the northern area of downtown and infill with a range of housing typologies.	152	\$	O				X				
10B	Transform the public and private realm of Wait/Roosevelt Avenue.	154	\$\$\$\$	C	Public/Private			X				
10C*	Close Wait Avenue between Brooks and Roosevelt to enhance the redevelopment potential of the area.	156	\$\$\$	C	Public/Private		X					
10D	Encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized lots along White Street.	157	\$	O	Public/Private	X						
10E	Encourage vertically mixed use buildings (residential uses on upper floors with retail on the ground floor), townhomes and civic buildings to be developed south of Elm Street.	158	\$	O	Public/Private			X				
10F	Encourage redevelopment and install streetscape improvements at the intersection of White and Elm to connect White Street to Brooks Street.	160	\$\$\$	C	Public/Private			X				
<b>11 Implementation Strategies</b>												
11A	Promote more frequent, smaller events in downtown that are more seasonally predictable and recurring.	169	\$\$\$\$	C	Public/Private			X				
11B	Attract a broad array of user groups, specifically children and college students, to downtown through strategic programming.	169	\$\$\$	C	Public/Private		X					

\*Top 10 Projects in 5 Years





# *Appendix*

# Appendix

FROM WALTER MAGAZINE – NOV. 30, 2015

## Twelve Raleigh Architects Rethink a Community's Downtown

BY J. MICHAEL WELTON

On a cool, rainy Saturday afternoon in early October, three intrepid women — two architects and a landscape architect — ventured out, on foot, from Town Hall in Wake Forest. They were determined to locate a holy grail in the surrounding landscape — a natural water feature to enhance a new urban plan for the nearly 200-year-old town.

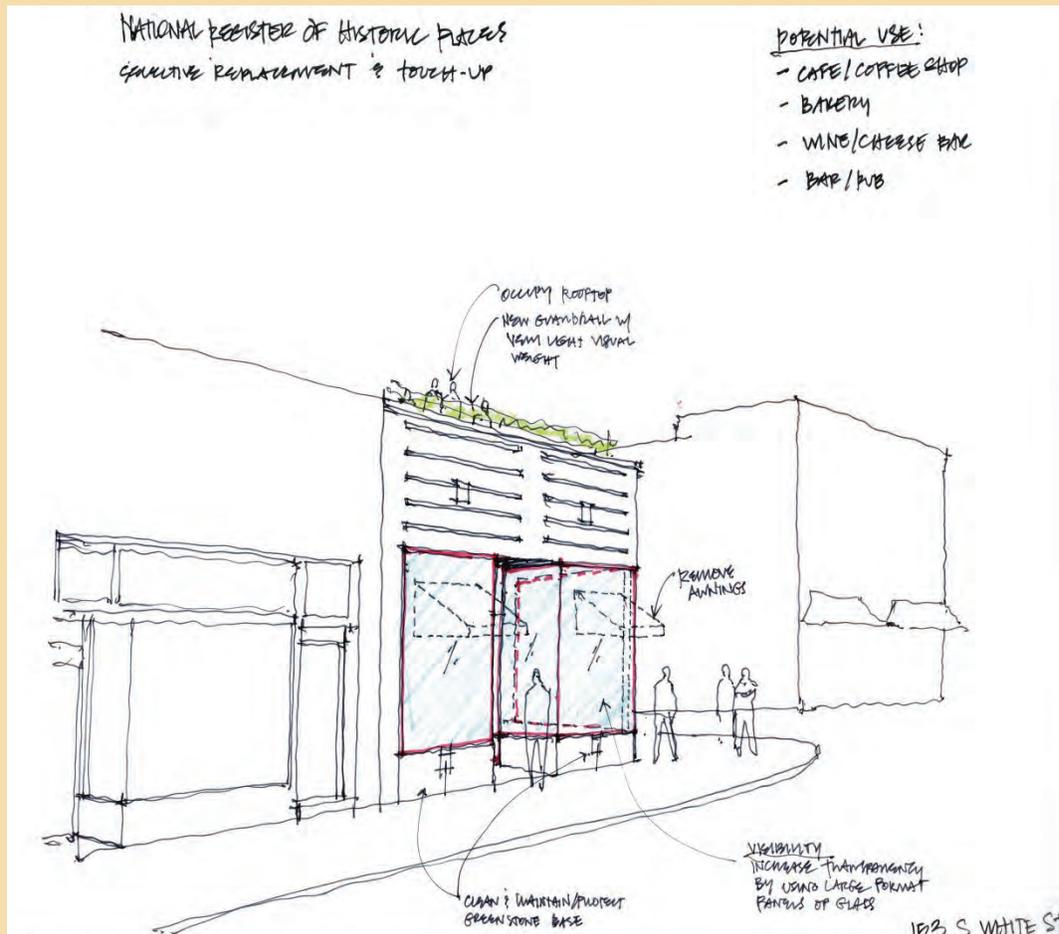
The three were part of a team of 12 Raleigh architects who'd been invited by Wake Forest Downtown, a nonprofit charged with fostering the health and vitality of downtown, to re-imagine it. The architects were working en charrette — a 19th-century French term from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. It's shorthand for an intense, day-long design workshop.

Erin Sterling Lewis, Tina Govan, and Julieta Sherk had already taken one walking tour that morning, during which Lewis had heard about foot paths along a natural stream partially covered by concrete and asphalt. Uncovering it might be an interesting idea, the three designers reasoned. Now, umbrellas in hand, the group slipped down to Miller

Park, ran across Roosevelt Street, trudged up a residential footpath on the eastern fringe, then rambled down to the town cemetery. Along the way, they monitored their stream as it surfaced at grade level, disappeared underground, then popped back up again.

Returning to Town Hall, they huddled with three other architects earnestly engaged in sketching out their own design strategies. Michael Stevenson was hatching a plan for two urban “bookends” — a transportation hub at the town's south end and a cultural hub at its north, with 1,600 linear feet of shops, homes, and offices on South White Street in between. Louis Cherry was drawing up a culinary incubator where multiple chefs could lease kitchen spaces, with a bar dropped strategically into its center. And Frank Harmon quietly sketched out a train station, a bus terminal, and residential units for the transportation hub.

Across the room, Matt Hale was working through drawings for a boutique hotel to stand next to a restaurant he'd already designed and built. Anthony Garcia was dreaming up ways to insert a wall of



The Perry Building reimagined by Brad Burns.

storefront glass into a brick facade along the town's Roosevelt Street gateway. Robby Johnson and Taylor Medlin were sketching out a pedestrian mall to link a pristine Town Hall with the messy vitality of commerce on White Street. Albert McDonald was working through plans for a rooftop bar on a restaurant he proposed for the intersection of White

Street at Roosevelt Street. And Brad Burns was reinvigorating a forgotten Art Deco gem transforming it from wood-paneled barbershop to light-infused cafe with indoor and outdoor seating.

It all took place in a tight window of time between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., with presentations to town officials afterwards.

The architects' concepts are now slated for the Wake Forest Renaissance Plan — a toolbox of guidelines for future developers, investors, and property owners. And if Wake Forest Mayor Vivian Jones has her way, each of these sketches will one day become reality. “As staff and elected officials go forward, and the private sector comes into downtown, they’ll show the ideas and encourage them to follow through with them,” she says. “If they do that with the architects, that would be great — but to follow through on them is what I anticipate.”

That would mean a series of positive eventual outcomes, including that daylit, holy grail of a stream, meandering in a park-like setting through the center of town.

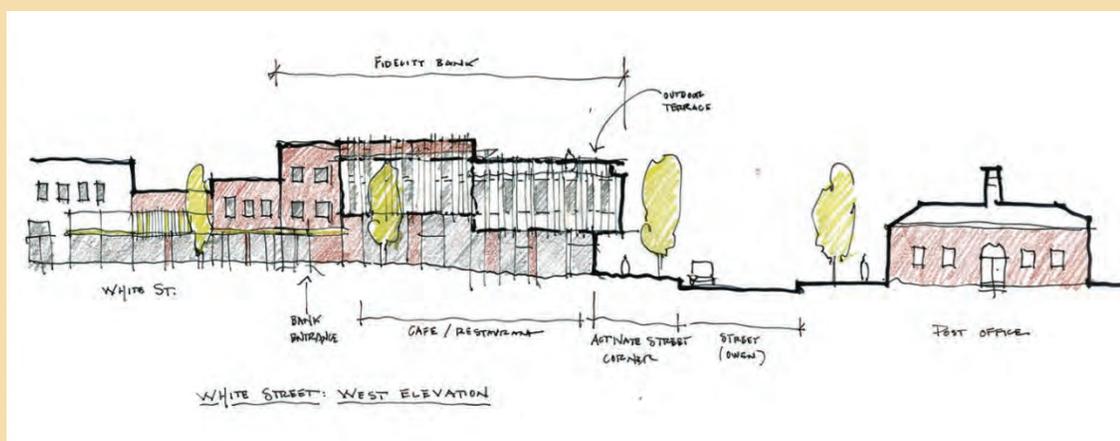
### Food for Thought

Anyone considering the idea of opening a new restaurant in an old building would do well to listen to an expert on the process. That’s the logic that leaders of Wake Forest Downtown — the organization that presented and funded the October architectural charrette — applied when they invited Chef

Matt Kelly, developer and owner of Durham’s Vin Rouge and Mateo restaurants, to brief 12 Raleigh architects studying their town.

Kelly spent an hour talking about the restaurant business, then fielded questions about buildings, parking, and funding. As it turns out, Wake Forest may be on the right track. “Right now, small Southern towns are on the upswing,” he says. “Davidson, N.C. has a restaurant that’s in the Bon Appétit top ten. And 10 years ago — a James Beard award in Raleigh? Who would think it?”

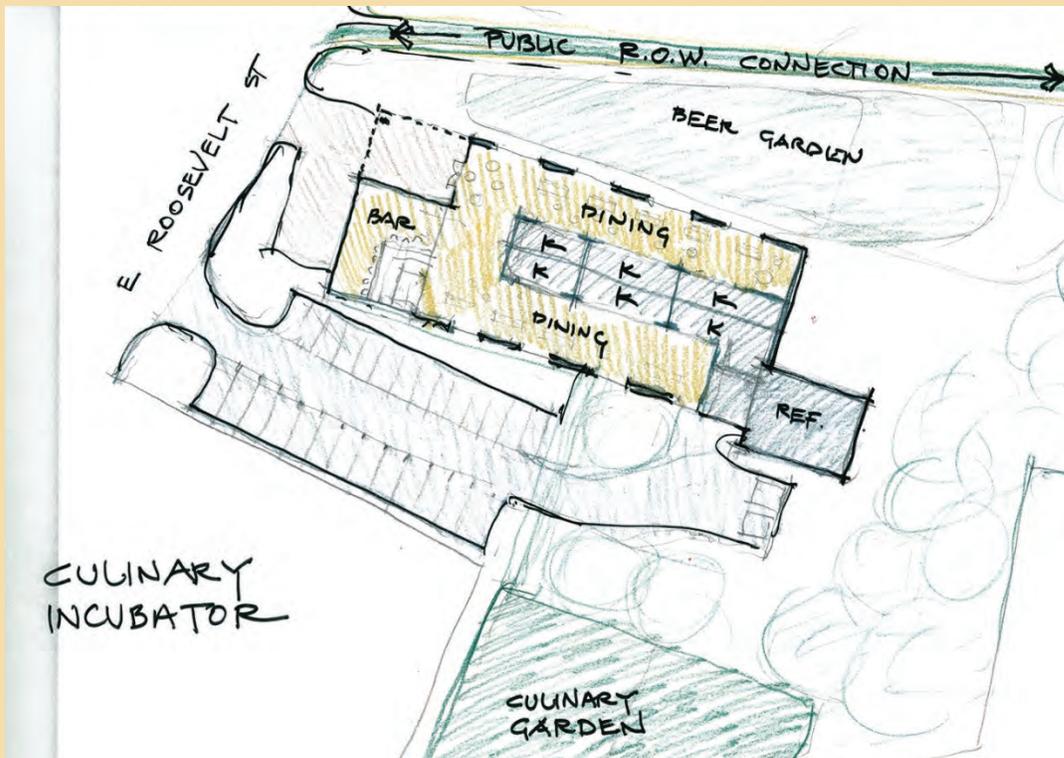
Kelly’s experienced. He’s opened multiple restaurants in a single year — in Charlotte at SouthPark; in Wilmington; and in Durham at The Book Exchange — spending \$2.5 million in the process. He likes corner locations for their visibility and parking. And he likes to be prepared before he makes a move — though intuition does play a role. “It’s a feeling — you look at a space and you know what it is,” he says. “With designers, you have to listen but not give up your vision. As an owner you have to fight for where the budget’s going.”



Fidelity Bank by Robby Johnson and Taylor Medlin.



Johnson Building/Victorian Square by Albert McDonald.



A culinary incubator by Louis Cherry.

A restaurant's concept and layout — plus how many diners show up — drive its profitability. Change a floor plan or add a feature, and you might lose money. “The layout is about what I can do with this space — how many seats with this concept in mind?” he says. “The concept is the variable. How much can I make from an individual in that seat? How much per square foot?”

And believe it or not, scarcity of parking spaces can be an asset, not a liability, in developing a restaurant for a small town. The more people on the sidewalks, the better the business for all. “Plan on not

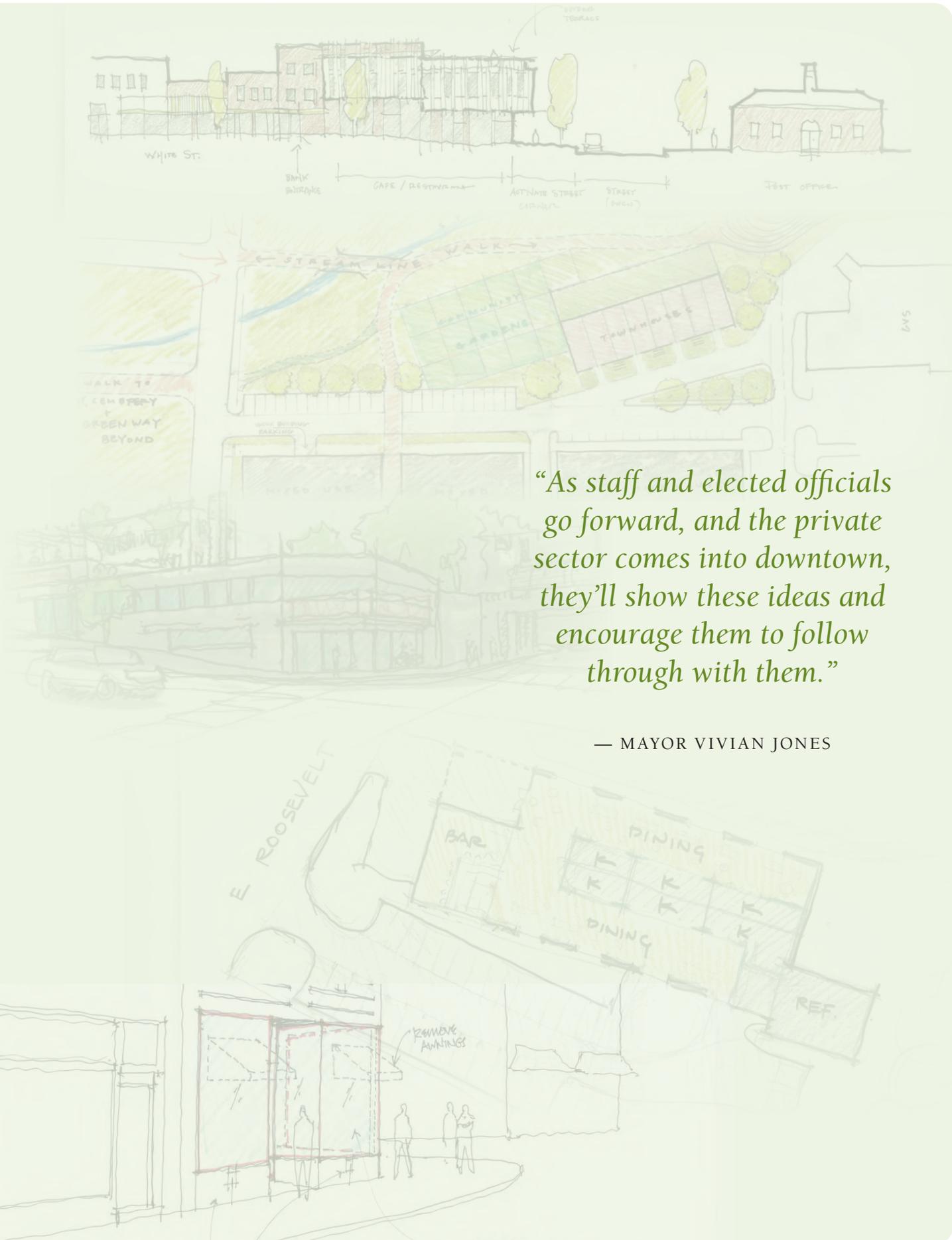
having (your own) parking — that's part of the gig, because you have to walk and pass other businesses,” he says. “The key is to let people know where the parking is — you don't want it to be a secret.”

Now that the economy's on the rebound, there's more willingness to invest in restaurants by property owners and even groups of individuals in the community. “A thousand people giving \$500 each — it can work,” he says. “Anything can work.”

But, the veteran chef says, 50 percent of a restaurant's success still depends on luck. ■



Erin Sterling Lewis and Tina Govan reclaim a hidden stream.



*“As staff and elected officials go forward, and the private sector comes into downtown, they’ll show these ideas and encourage them to follow through with them.”*

— MAYOR VIVIAN JONES

## BLOG POST

## The Parking Problem: Does Form Really Follow Function?

*How minimum parking standards make it difficult to design places for people, not cars*

BY CRAIG LEWIS, STANTEC URBAN PLACES GROUP

Raise your right hand and repeat after me — “I will work to reduce the negative impacts of automobiles on our cities and towns, beginning with the elimination of minimum parking standards.”

For years I’ve used the phrase “form follows parking” to describe the state of our cities caused by poor site planning and architectural design. I’m really analyzing our profession’s general acquiescence to the dominance of the automobile over our urban form. The influence of vehicles became firmly rooted in our zoning and building codes decades ago. Today, it’s not uncommon to see codes that often exhaustively attempt to regulate every facet of a car’s existence: from the width of a homeowner’s driveway, to the number and size of parking spaces it has available while away from home.

However, I believe form should follow people, not cars. Our cities should be formed by what is best for the pedestrian and cyclist, not for the parked car. So today, I make a pledge to advocate for the repeal of all minimum parking standards.

Why am I making this pledge? It’s simple. Government has been a terrible predictor

of human behavior — and minimum parking requirements is a zoning standard predicated on human behavior. It assumes what we drive, how long we park, and how far we are willing to walk. In that zealous desire to ensure that every car has the maximum amount of convenience, we have paved over tens of thousands of greenfields and old-growth forests. We’ve increased stormwater runoff, urban heat islands, and water pollution. Parking lots created by minimum requirements have served to spread communities apart, making them far less walkable and bikeable, ensuring that every building be completely self-sufficient in the unlikely event of a parking catastrophe. Thus, we’ve made land financially inefficient by precluding more income-producing opportunities with largely unused asphalt.

### How did we get here?

When the suburban revolution began following World War II, millions fled the cities in favor of “greener” pastures. But the suburbs came with a hitch — you needed a car to survive. Thus, the automobile had to become a central component in community design. So, while the suburbs were paved with the greatest of intentions, mostly they were just paved.

Thus, minimum parking requirements were

born. If the car was going to be the lifeline holding suburbs together, then managing them in their “parked” state (which is nearly 95% of the time) is *the* primary requirement. As a result, zoning codes today include a table of minimum parking requirements that span a dozen or more pages.

With 30% or more of our communities covered by asphalt, it’s time for our profession to take action. In 2000, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) recommended 4 to 4.5 spaces per thousand square feet for shopping centers, depending on the size of the center. These numbers are based on peak demand at centers across the country. According to their own analyses, the ULI/ICSC parking ratios “provide for a surplus of parking spaces during all but 19 hours of the more than 3,000 hours per year during which a shopping center is open.”

### The Results Are In

Spartanburg, South Carolina chose to eliminate their standards years ago. In doing so, development decisions shifted from being centered around parking cars to being centered around the pedestrian — how close they were to the central square or other amenities. Places for people came first, and parking was more efficiently managed as a collective utility, resulting in individual parcels performing better economically. Smaller buildings in downtown can now be viably reoccupied without the burden of off-street parking standards.

Other cities have followed, like Fayetteville, Arkansas, a city that recently stopped using minimum parking standards citywide and Fargo, North Dakota, a city that discovered

the vibrancy that ensues in downtown when parking is no longer the “driver.”

### A Necessary First Step

Removing parking requirements alone won’t solve the problem. Unraveling the web of standards that supports the automobile’s dominance over our cities will take time and a concerted focus around revising zoning ordinances.

If your community isn’t ready to take the plunge, these baby steps will help.

- **Cut existing standards in half.** It still preserves a safety net and finds compromise with those who believe parking standards are necessary.
- **Eliminate standards for small buildings.** The best way to energize a vacant building is not to require more parking to re-occupy it, but less. Consider eliminating requirements for buildings that are less than 5,000 square feet.
- **Eliminate parking standards in downtowns.** In downtown areas, parking should be treated like a utility just like water and power, and managed collectively. Most downtowns are actually plagued with too much parking.

When I wrote my first minimum parking code almost 20 years ago, we cut the current standards in half and it turned out just fine. The parking apocalypse never occurred. Instead, those communities became more compact, more walkable, and more vibrant. Today, I ask you to join me in reclaiming our cities and towns. We can begin by driving a stake in the heart of minimum parking standards. ■



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TOWN *of*  
WAKE FOREST