Suffolk

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

JUNE 2018

BENCHMARK

Suffolk

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

ADOPTED BY

SUFFOLK CITY COUNCIL

DATE

JUNE 20, 2018

RESOLUTION NO.

18-R-019

NANSEMOND 1646
SUFFOLK 1742
19
74
CITY of SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CITIZENS OF SUFFOLK

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

PREPARED BY

Benchmark Planning

NANSEMOND 1646
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19
74
CITY of SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA

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1

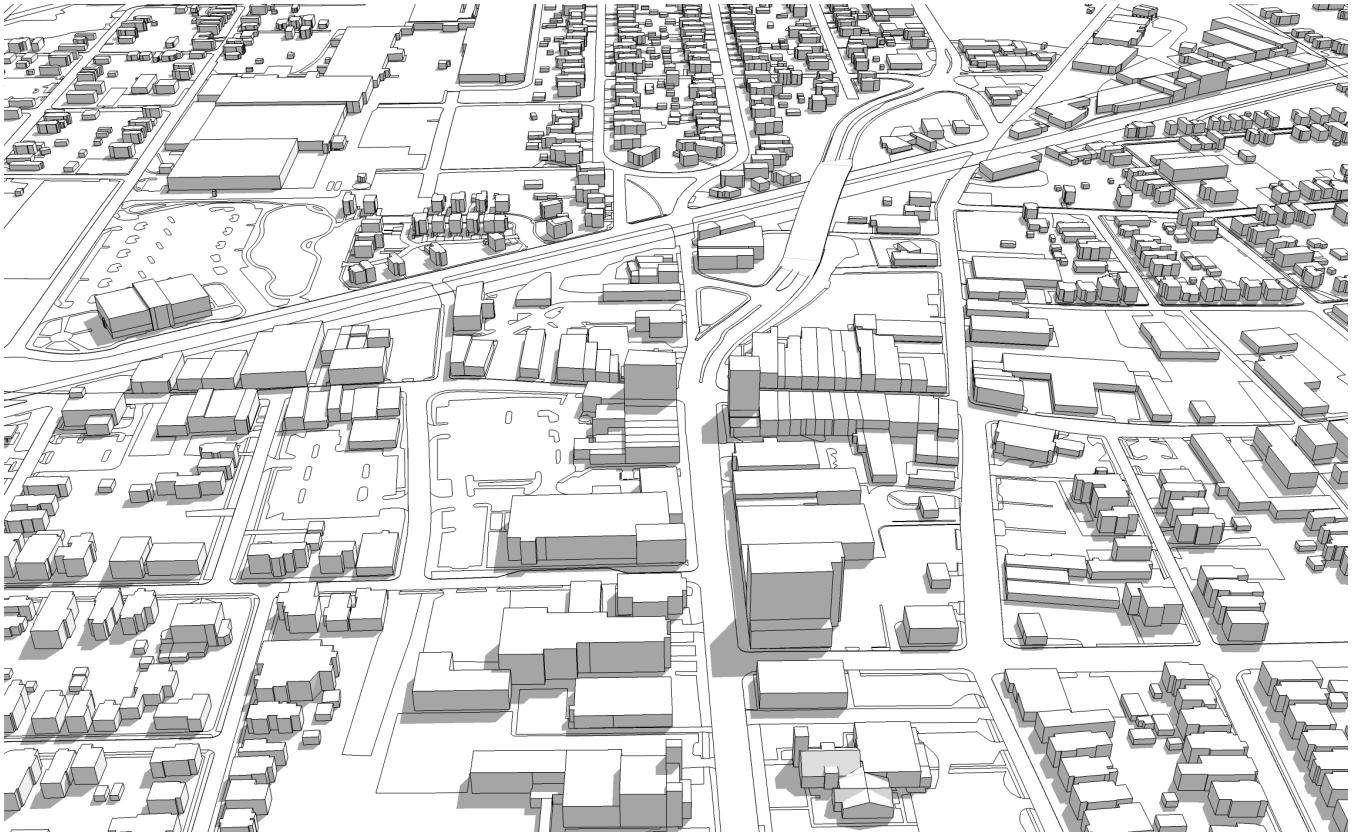
INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Since the adoption of the Downtown Suffolk Initiatives Plan in 1998, the City has worked diligently to revitalize its historic commercial core. The resulting actions after the adoption of the Downtown Suffolk Initiatives Plan led to the completion of numerous projects that helped encourage reinvestment within the greater downtown area. The primary projects completed included Constant's Wharf Park and the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel and Conference Center; the Suffolk Seaboard Station Railroad Museum; Prentis Street and the restored Prentis House; the Suffolk Cultural Arts Center in the restored high school; Jefferson School Lofts; Main Street streetscape; the new city hall; and private renovation of two blocks of buildings in the 100 block of West Washington Street. While each of these projects have worked together to create a more active downtown, much work is still needed to revitalize the downtown, helping it become a vibrant and thriving centerpiece for the city.

In order to build upon these significant efforts, a new master plan for downtown was developed. This master plan process began shortly after the adoption of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan in 2015. The City Council identified the Downtown Suffolk Initiatives Plan as a priority for review, and city staff determined that an update was warranted based on an initial evaluation of the plan and its components. The City issued a request for proposals and hired a consulting team to assist with the preparation of the new Master Plan for downtown.

▼ FIGURE 1.1 BIRDS EYE VIEW OF DOWNTOWN SUFFOLK



MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Downtown Master Plan was developed over a 12-month period through a strong planning and economic development partnership that included input from the general public, elected officials, city staff representing nearly all departments, business owners and a variety of subject matter experts. The four-phase approach included the following:

Phase One - Research & Analysis
Phase Two - Design Downtown Workshops
Phase Three - Master Plan Development
Phase Four - Adoption Process

▼ FIGURE 1.1 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

▼ TABLE 1.1 PLANNING PROCESS DATES

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	DATE
Research & Analysis	January - June 2017
City Council Kickoff Presentation	February 2017
Listening Sessions (3 days)	April 2017
Downtown Business Owner Presentation	April 2017
Downtown Design Workshops (4 days)	June 2017
Master Plan Development	July - December 2017
Rotary Club Presentation	August 2017
City Council Work Session - Review Draft Master Plan	December 2017
Planning Commission Consideration	TBD
City Council Consideration	TBD

▼ FIGURE 1.2 PHOTO COLLAGE OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DURING THE DESIGN DOWNTOWN WORKSHOPS

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

During the master plan process, Suffolk's business community and residents were provided several opportunities to participate. The primary opportunities included listening sessions, community presentations, attendance at design downtown workshops, the project website and public presentations made to the City Council during the project. Approximately 1,500 individuals participated through one of these outreach opportunities, generating ideas for the future development of downtown Suffolk.

The highlight of the public input portion of the process was the Design Downtown Workshops held at mid-point of the project from Monday, June 26 through Thursday, June 29, 2017, in the storefront of 120 North Main Street. The opening night of the workshops attracted over 100 people that included presentations from members of the community in Pecha Keucha format. The Pecha Keucha format allowed the community presenters to tell a story in 6 minutes and 40 seconds through 20 images that remained on the slide presentation screen for 20 seconds each. The images utilized by each presenter helped them communicate the type of downtown they would like to see Suffolk become, highlighting images of development in Suffolk they would like to see more of and in some cases displaying aspirational images from other communities that represented potential ideas for what downtown can become in Suffolk.

The second, third and fourth days of the Design Downtown Workshops provided the community with a daytime, drop-in session option for participation from 1pm to 5pm followed by a 6pm evening session each night. Over 75 people participated each of those days. The Design Downtown Workshops provided opportunities to develop and test new ideas for the downtown area. Workshop attendees met with the planning and design team and worked in small groups to discuss their ideas and solutions to develop and improve downtown.

▼ TABLE 1.2 DESIGN DOWNTOWN DATES

SESSIONS	DATE & TIMES
Opening Session	Monday, June 26 - 6:00pm
Drop-in Session	Tuesday, June 27 - 1:00pm - 5:00pm
Design Pin-Up	Tuesday, June 27 - 6:00pm
Drop-in Session	Wednesday, June 28 - 1:00pm - 5:00pm
Design Pin-Up	Wednesday, June 28 - 6:00pm
Drop-in Session	Thursday, June 29 - 1:00pm - 5:00pm
Closing Session	Thursday, June 29 - 6:00pm

PECHA KEUCHA

[*petca kutca*] a presentation style where the presenter has 20 slides and 20 seconds to discuss each slide. This format is intended to keep the presentation concise and fast-paced.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PechaKucha

1,200+ website visits
60+ in 15 listening sessions
250+ workshop participants
THANK YOU TO ALL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE MASTER PLAN PROCESS!

The key themes that emerged from the Design Downtown Workshops and the overall process included the following:

- **Improve downtown entertainment options**
  - Create a public event space, movies, live music, festivals
- **Facilitate business growth**
  - Develop clearer approval processes, better parking management, more effective business signage, small business support and formation of new small businesses
- **Provide avenues for education**
  - Create a magnet school, technical and community college, incubators/mentorship
- **Redevelop and clean up underutilized properties**
  - Identify opportunities for redevelopment, facade grants, retail strategy, tactical urbanism and the continued enforcement of appropriate historic preservation and maintenance to properties.
- **Improve public spaces**
  - New lighting, landscaping, programming, public art, new public spaces/access to river

▼ FIGURE 1.3 IDEAS GENERATED AT THE WORKSHOPS

2

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW

The research and analysis section of the master plan established a foundation of background information that helped inform the public and key stakeholders during the development of the plan. The analysis began with the confirmation of the primary study area boundary, the downtown core, which consists of the primary cluster of downtown commercial buildings. In addition to this core study area, a larger influence area was identified because the "edge" of Suffolk's downtown is not the same for everyone. This larger area has a significant impact on the downtown core. With the study area defined, the planning and design team collected data from existing plans and ordinances, and mapped and analyzed the key physical and policy attributes that informed the urban design analysis and potential opportunity sites. The research and analysis also included a review of land use, zoning, ownership, development activity and other property characteristics. In addition, the analysis considered mobility and transportation patterns and conditions in downtown, identifying corridors for vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles and transit. Using the gathered data, the team was able to measure development potential and infrastructure capacity against current absorption rates and the potential of downtown to expand its ability to capture new development as presented in the market overview. Ultimately, the research and analysis phase helped uncover downtown's opportunity sites, which are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.

URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

Influence Area Map

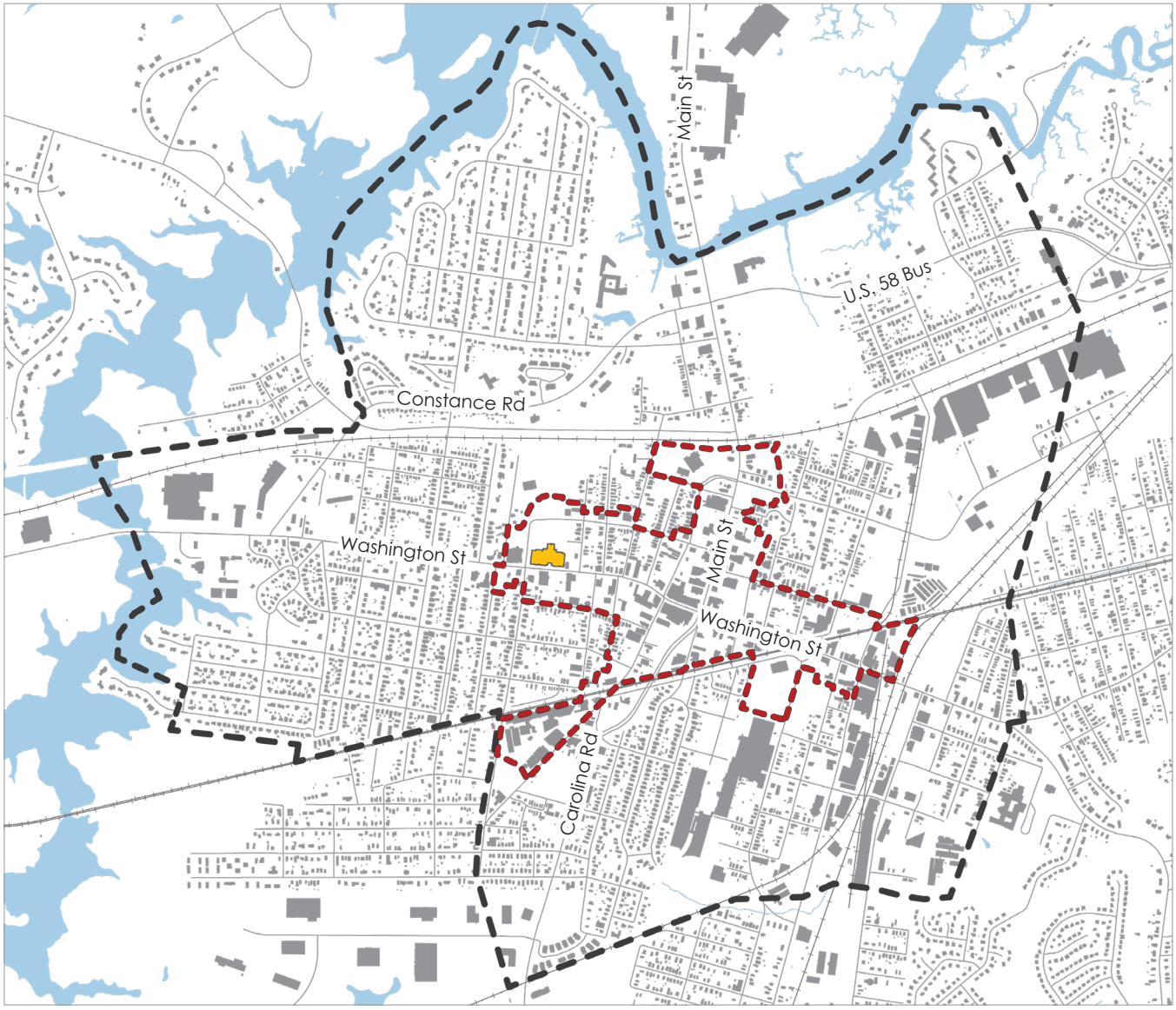
The area of downtown influence – those neighborhoods and corridors that have a direct link to downtown is well represented by the original boundaries of the City of Suffolk as displayed in Map 2.1. This 2.5 square mile area is roughly the area of Suffolk that is within walking distance of downtown where many of the residents' needs for goods and services could be satisfied. The walking distances range from ½ mile to the inner most portion of the influence area up to 1.25 miles to the most outer limit of the influence area boundary.

Downtown Core Map

The downtown core boundary was drawn to avoid single family housing and to capture the extent of the contiguous commercial area of downtown. This is the 160 acre built up commercial core of the historic part of the city. The downtown core, displayed in Map 2.2,is the primary area of study for the master plan and its recommendations.

> *"Get the habit of analysis - analysis will in time enable synthesis to become your habit of mind."*
>
> - Frank Lloyd Wright

MAP 2.1 DOWNTOWN STUDY AREA



MAP LEGEND

- Building Footprint
- City Hall
- Downtown Core
- Influence Area

NORTH

1/2 MILE

MAP 2.2 DOWNTOWN CORE AREA

MAP LEGEND

- Building Footprints
- Parking Lots
- City Hall
- Downtown Core

NORTH

1,000 FEET

LAND USE

As displayed in Map 2.3, the existing land uses in the downtown core are public and institutional (41%), commercial and industrial (44%), Single Family (10%), and Multi-Family (5%). The public and institutional land use category is a relatively high number, even for a courthouse community; it means that a large number of buildings in downtown are not generating any real estate tax revenue. Conversely, the public and institutional uses deliver people downtown that become potential customers for the commercial uses located in the downtown core.

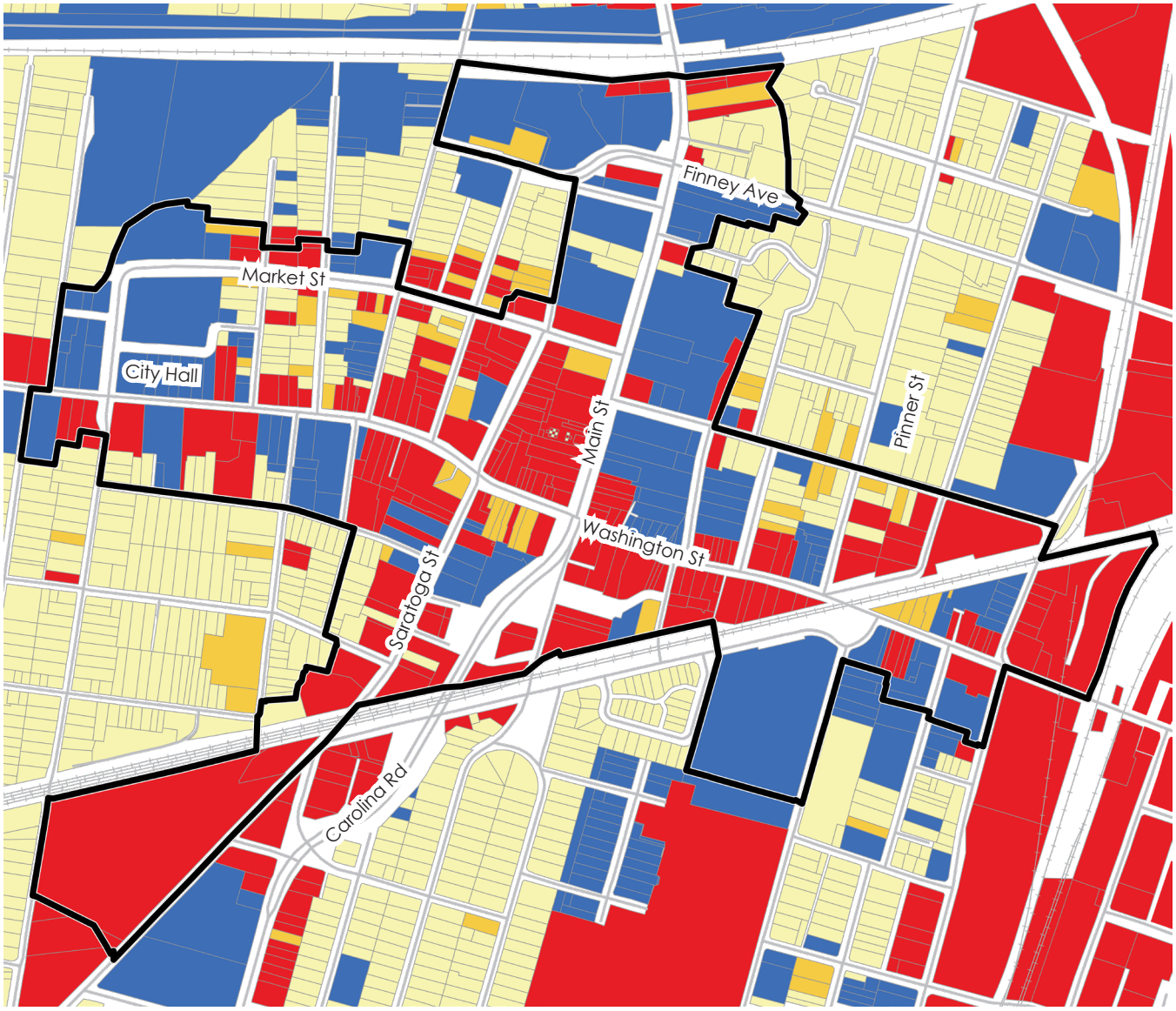
City Ownership Map

Of the public and institutional uses downtown, the City owns approximately 20%, which represents roughly 33 acres of the 160 acre core area, as displayed in Map 2.4. The City has increased its footprint in both space and number of employees in the downtown area with a variety of city offices, school system offices and the court system. Many communities have not followed the strategy of maintaining key government facilities in downtown and their downtowns have often suffered as a result. Government facilities, public sector employees and customers/users of those government services generate a great deal of demand for goods and services, food and other items throughout downtown. Therefore, it is important to retain government services and operations in downtown.

As the catalytic property owner in downtown, the City, as one of the goals of this plan, needs to maximize the use of the property that it owns to help create new demand, new tax revenue and to catalyze additional private investment. City owned land that is unused or underutilized provides that opportunity to influence positive change and private sector investment.

▼ FIGURE 2.1 SUFFOLK CITY HALL

▼ MAP 2.3 DOWNTOWN CORE AREA LAND USE



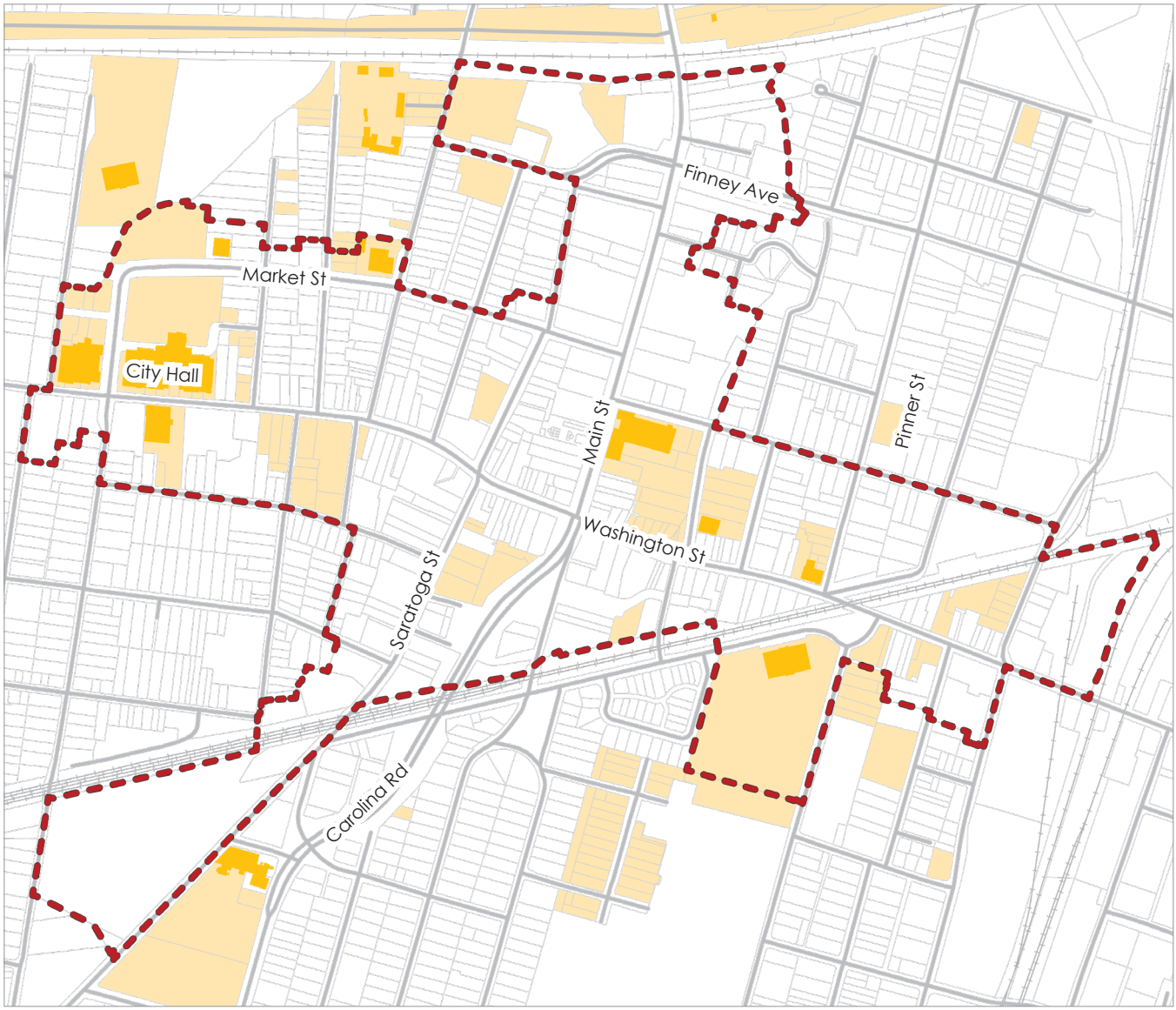
MAP LEGEND [GENERAL LAND USE CLASSIFICATIONS]

- Public & Institutional
- Commercial & Industrial
- Single Family
- Multi-Family
- Downtown Core
- Parcels

NORTH

1,000 FEET

MAP 2.4 CITY OWNERSHIP



MAP LEGEND

- City of Suffolk, Building
- City of Suffolk, Parcel
- Downtown Core
- Roads
- Parcels

NORTH

1,000 FEET

TRANSPORTATON

Traffic Volume [Average Daily Volume]

The intersection at Washington and Main Streets is the 100% corner of downtown. The 100% corner is the most visible intersection in downtown and has the highest traffic and pedestrian volumes in the downtown core. Two of the tallest buildings in downtown are located there, demonstrating that this has been the most prominent commercial location for decades. Main Street carries approximately 19,000 vehicles a day, while Washington Street has about 11,000 vehicles per day. Carolina Road, leading into downtown carries 11,500 vehicles per day. Other critical secondary street connectors in downtown include Finney Avenue (6,900 VPD), County/Liberty Street (3,800/5,300 VPD), Market Street (2,800 VPD), Saratoga Street (2,600 VPD) and Bank Street (2,000 VPD). The highest count recorded in the VDOT system in Suffolk is about 30,000 vehicles/day along Main Street, Route 10, between Highway 460 and Highway 58.

Vehicular & Pedestrian Safety

The City of Suffolk Police Department provided both vehicular and pedestrian crash data from 2010 to 2017 for all of downtown. As expected, those routes that carry the highest volumes of traffic correlate with the most amount of crashes of both types. The statistics do not reflect the severity of the accident or if injuries occurred. A more detailed analysis could uncover the particular characteristics of each crash at each intersection.

Vehicular Crash Locations

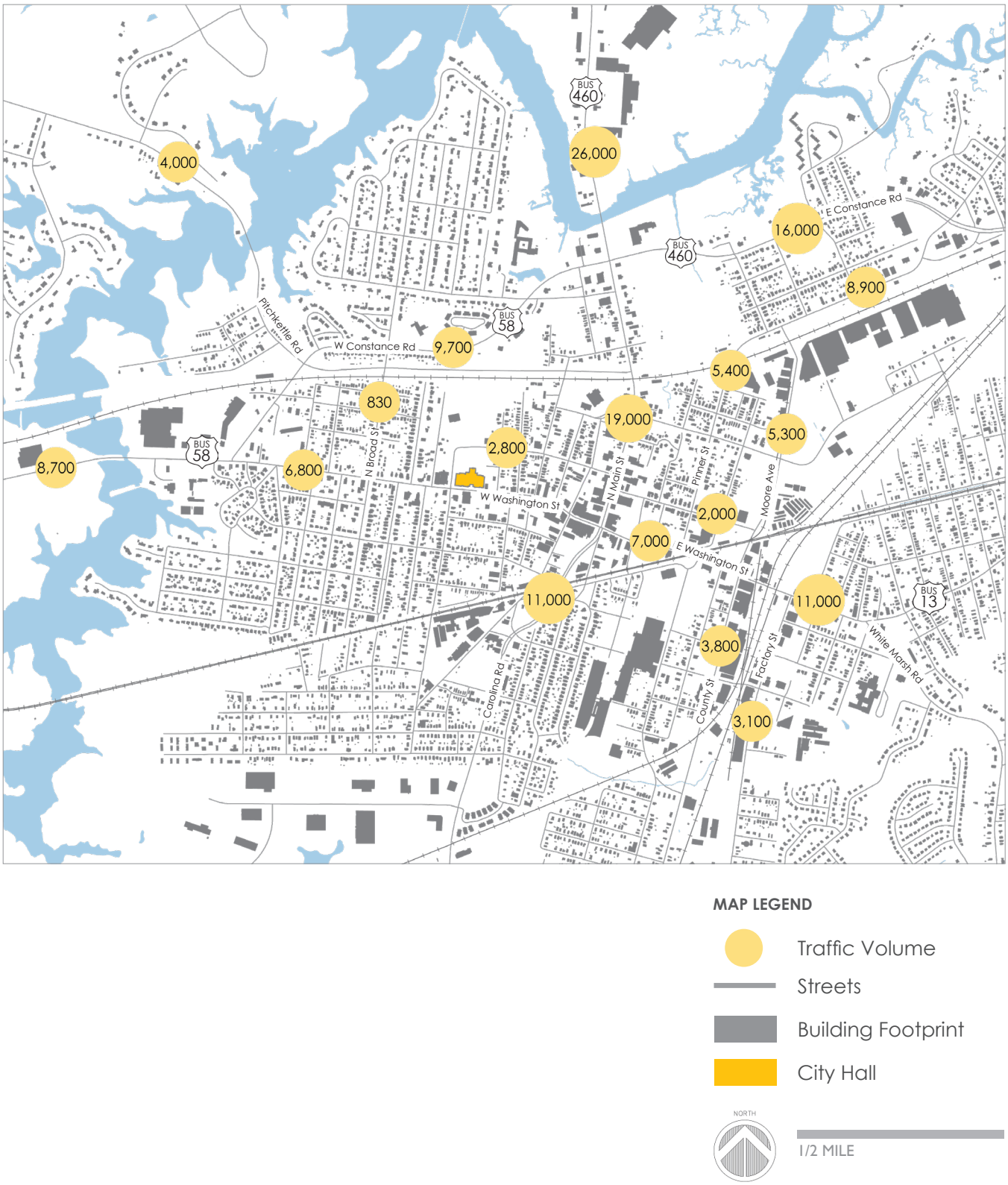
In the past 7 years, the intersection of Finney and Main Street had the highest amount of vehicular crashes with 44 total, followed by the intersection of Main Street and Washington Streets with 41 crashes. The next highest crash rate occurred at County/Liberty, which is a truck route, and East Washington Streets with 35 crashes. These rates are not terribly high given the timeframe, however, they do indicate a need to focus more closely on safety and street design at those locations. Generally speaking, the majority of accidents occur along Washington and Main Streets at any location along each street where a cross street intersects with it.

Pedestrian Collision Locations

As noted in Map 2.8, the majority of pedestrian collisions with vehicles occurred just outside the most active core of downtown. Most drivers are on the constant lookout for pedestrians at Main Street and Washington Street where pedestrian signals and crosswalks are highly visible. The intersections of Main/Finney, Main/Oakdale Terrace and Main/Washington Streets each had a couple crashes. The intersections of Washington/South Street, Washington/Commerce Street and Washington/Pinner/Holladay Streets also had a couple crashes each. The pedestrian crash rates are quite low and indicate that downtown is a relatively safe place to be a pedestrian.

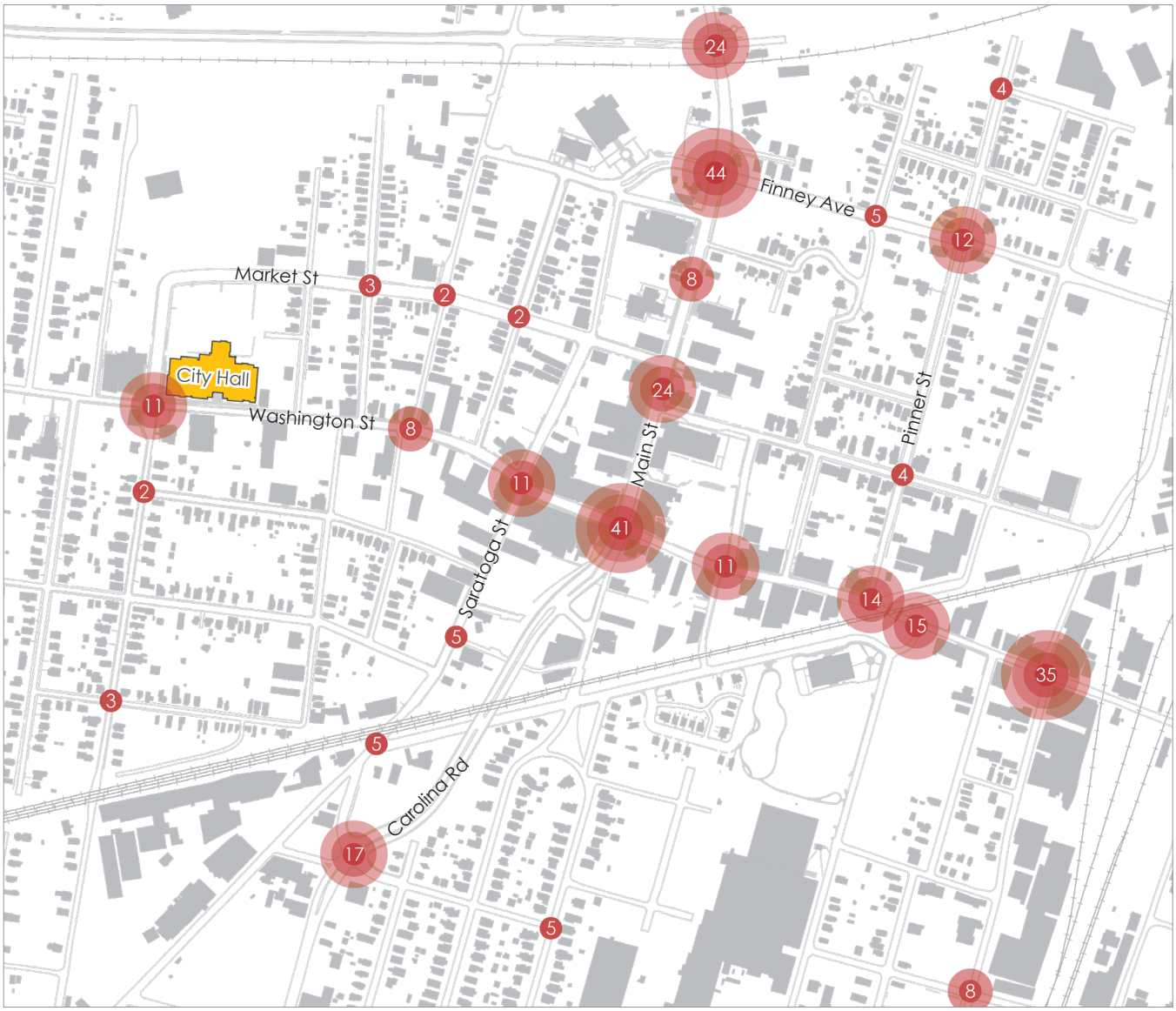
MAP 2.5 CORE AREA - TRAFFIC VOLUME [ADV]

MAP 2.6 INFLUENCE AREA - TRAFFIC VOLUME [ADV]



MAP 2.7 VEHICULAR CRASH STATISTICS 2010 - 2017

Source: VDOT



MAP LEGEND

- 1 - 5 Crashes
- 6 - 10 Crashes
- 11 - 25 Crashes
- 25+ Crashes
- Building Footprint
- City Hall
- Streets

NORTH

1,000 FEET

MAP 2.8 PEDESTRIAN CRASH STATISTICS 2010 - 2017

Source: VDOT

MAP LEGEND

1 Crash

2 - 3 Crashes

Building Footprint

City Hall

Streets

NORTH

1,000 FEET

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

As identified in the *2017 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*, downtown has a strong grid street network with adequate pedestrian facilities. The *Plan* recommends that a study be completed to improve sidewalks and crosswalks along Main and Washington Streets. However, the roadways are very constrained with limited room for bicycle or shared-use facilities. In addition, downtown has at-grade rail crossings that often serve as physical and psychological barriers to bicycle and pedestrian movements. Another limitation is the lack of connectivity to downtown within the larger influence area.

One of the primary goals and opportunities outlined in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is to improve connectivity to downtown by extending the bicycle and pedestrian network into neighborhoods surrounding the downtown core, focusing efforts along major transportation corridors like Pitchkettle Road. One way this connectivity can be accomplished is by making connections along existing and future shared-use paths.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan recommendations for strategic opportunity corridors in the downtown core are displayed in Map 2.9. Due to the physical constraints of Main Street and Washington Street, coupled with the priority for pedestrian accessibility and on-street parking, it is highly unlikely that either of these corridors can support set aside bicycle or shared-use facilities. The secondary streets surrounding the core of downtown provide a greater opportunity for dedicated bicycle and shared-use facilities to connect with existing and future bicycle and shared-use facilities.

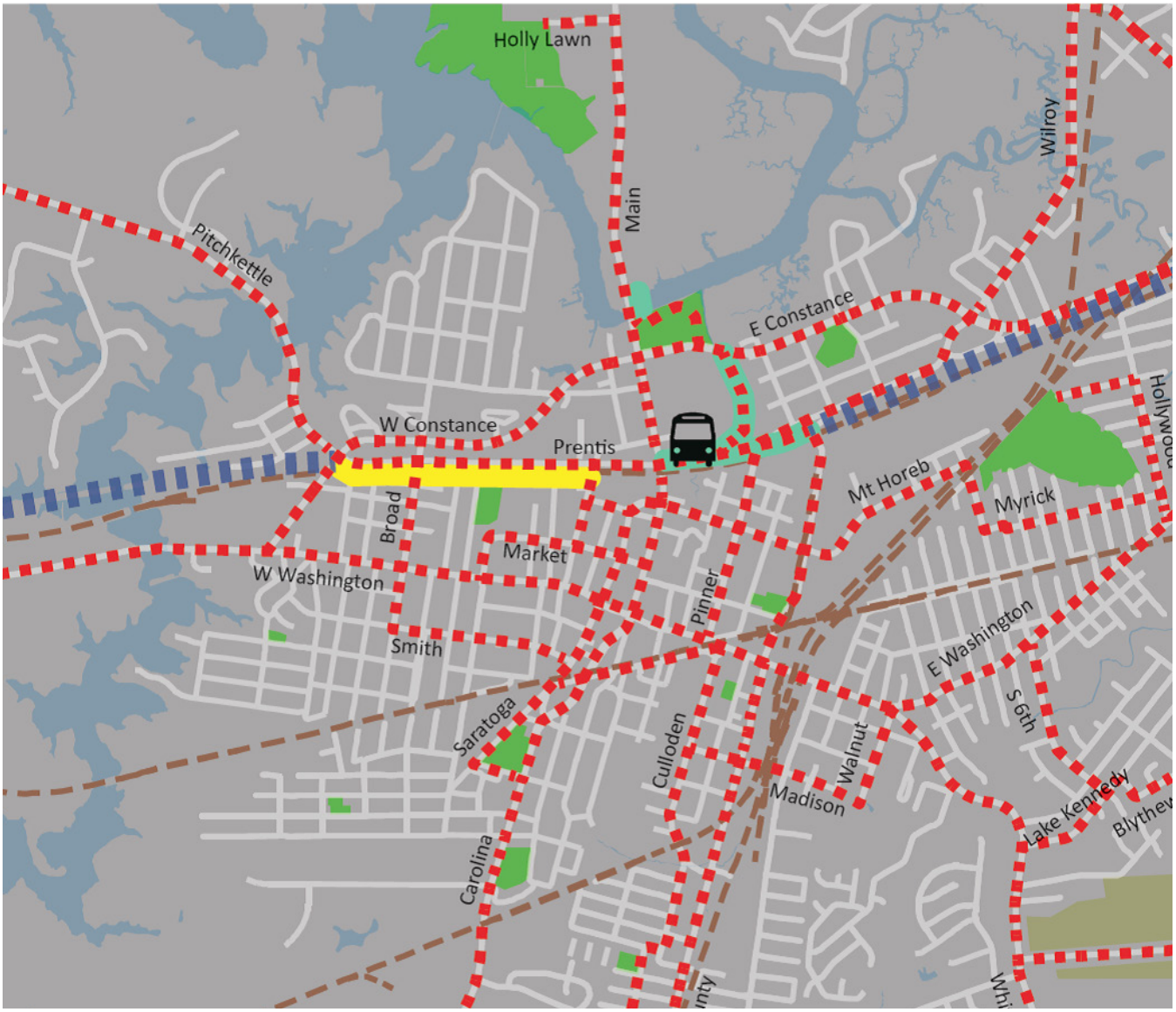
The most feasible bicycle focused enhancement in downtown is the use of other markings or designations, not facilities, as outlined in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan tool kit. Although the traffic volumes are higher downtown than the recommended thresholds in the bicycle and pedestrian plan, the slower speeds downtown and traffic calming as a result of crosswalks and on-street parking help create a higher degree of driver awareness, making downtown somewhat more safe for bicyclists than a typical road or street in Suffolk. Since downtown has such a low frequency of vehicular and pedestrian crashes, bicycle traffic in downtown will most likely be a safe form of transportation, even without a set aside facility. The use of markings, such as shared lane marking or sharrows, will help alert drivers that bicycles are also present in downtown and may be using vehicular lanes ahead.

Public Transportation Maps

Downtown is well served by the Suffolk Transit System, which includes three primary routes that traverse the heart of downtown (Red, Yellow, and Gold routes) with the Green route serving the Constant's Wharf area. The Main Transfer Station is located on the edge of the downtown core off Prentis Street. Buses run on a one hour frequency from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm, carrying approximately 8,500 riders per month in and around downtown.

▼ MAP 2.9 BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN - STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY CORRIDORS

Source: City of Suffolk Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan



Waterbody
City Park
National Wildlife Refuge
Growth Area Boundary
Suffolk City Boundary
Streets and Roadways
Active Railways

Transit
Transfer Station

Existing Facilities
Existing Sidepaths (Adjacent to Street)
Existing Shared-Use Paths (Not Adjacent to Street)
Existing Bike Lanes
Existing Unimproved Trails
Existing sidewalks not shown, for map clarity.

Planned Or Under Construction Facilities
Planned Sidepaths

Strategic Opportunity Corridors
Corridors along Existing Streets/Paths
Corridors along Abandoned Railways
Corridors that Create Other Connections

NORTH

▼ MAP 2.10 PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

MAP LEGEND

Bus Routes

- Orange Route
- Red Route
- Yellow Route
- Gold Route
- Green Route

- Downtown Transfer Station
- Bus Stop
- Streets
- Building Footprint
- City Hall

NORTH

1,000 FEET

PARKING

Total Land Area

The total land area of the downtown core devoted to parking is approximately 25.3%. (40.4 acres of 160 acres) That does not include on street parking which would likely bring the number closer to 30%. About 90% of that parking is paved and around 10% is gravel/earth. Compared to other downtowns of similar size, that percentage devoted to parking is about average; however, it still represents a high percentage of land downtown that is producing little revenue in either property taxes or parking fees. If parking occupancy is high – that percentage is justifiable. If occupancy is low – it represents an opportunity for redevelopment without much of an impact on parking resource use.

Downtown Core Inventory

As noted on Map 2.11, there are a total of 3,292 parking spaces within the downtown core study area: 2,707 total off-street spaces and 585 on-street spaces. Within the off street inventory, 1,166 spaces are private (43% - dark gray), 1,385 spaces are for general public use (51% - green) with an additional 156 spaces that are public spaces, but are restricted to city employee users (6% - blue).

Occupancy Map

As part of updating the parking information, a peak occupancy analysis was performed for a focused area in the core of downtown adjacent to and in the immediate vicinity of the courthouse. The peak occupancy analysis included 494 spaces contained in 5 public surface lots and 115 on-street parking spaces as identified in Map 2.12. After coordinating with the Suffolk Sheriff's Office, the occupancy study focused on the week of May 8th. The parking spaces in this courthouse focus area were inventoried for occupancy from 9am to 10 am, 11am to 1pm and 4pm to 5pm on Wednesday, May 10th and Friday, May 12th. The peak occupancy time was identified as Wednesday 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Specifically, the courthouse parking lot along East Washington and Commerce Streets had the highest occupancy at 88%. The second highest was the city lot on Saratoga Street between Washington and Market Streets at 76%. The other city lot on Saratoga between Washington and Cherry Streets came in at 71%. Free, downtown, on-street parking is the most convenient and highest demanded parking in every city. Suffolk is no different. Occupancy rates along Main Street, Washington and Commerce Streets all averaged between 82% and 74% during the occupancy inventory and analysis.

The occupancy analysis helped confirm that downtown does not have a parking problem. However, downtown does have a parking perception problem. In discussions with business/property owners, and most importantly, with downtown parking enforcement officials, it was determined that most of the free, on-street parking is occupied by downtown workers, residents and business owners, who do the two-hour shuffle, moving their cars around on-street spaces to avoid getting a parking ticket.

MAP 2.11 DOWNTOWN CORE PARKING INVENTORY

MAP LEGEND

- Public Parking
- Public Parking (Restricted - Police & Service Vehicles)
- Private Parking
- Building Footprint
- Downtown Core
- Roads

NORTH

1,000 FEET

MAP 2.12 PARKING PEAK OCCUPANCY

MAP LEGEND

PEAK OCCUPANCY

- > 75%
- 50% - 75%
- < 50%

- Additional Parking
- Building Footprint

NORTH

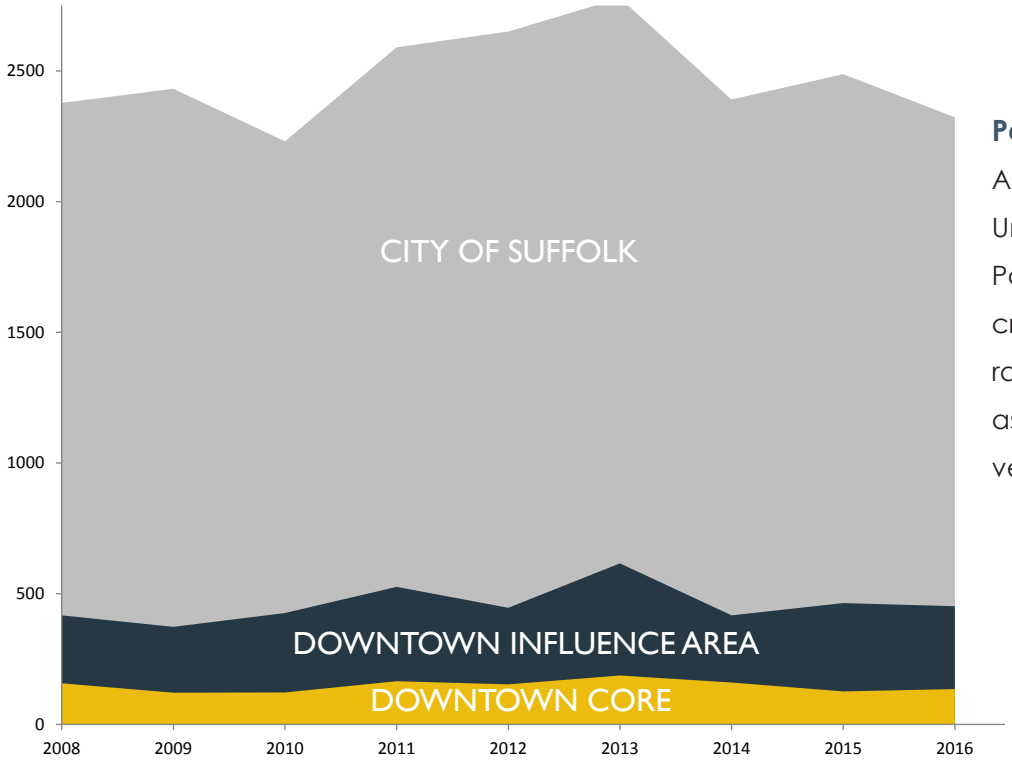
400 FEET

PUBLIC SAFETY

In addition to the parking perception problem, there is also a perception in the community that downtown is not safe. That perception has to be overcome for downtown to succeed. As demonstrated in the statistics for Part I and Part II crimes across the City from 2008 - 2016, crime in the downtown core has remained relatively flat when compared to the city as a whole. In many downtowns and in some parts of Suffolk's downtown, appearance and maintenance can sometimes lead to the perception that an area is not safe. Some communities have conducted Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) workshops to focus on downtown appearance and maintenance issues to improve the perception of safety. Some of the issues include improving lighting, especially in parking lots and alley ways / connectors to parking areas, removing or trimming overgrown or poorly maintained landscaping that obstructs views, general maintenance and clean up of properties in disrepair, pedestrian improvements with safe crosswalks and traffic calming measures, and increasing visibility of the police and their presence throughout the downtown. In addition to these techniques, placemaking measures and building storefront improvements can help improve the perception of safety as well.

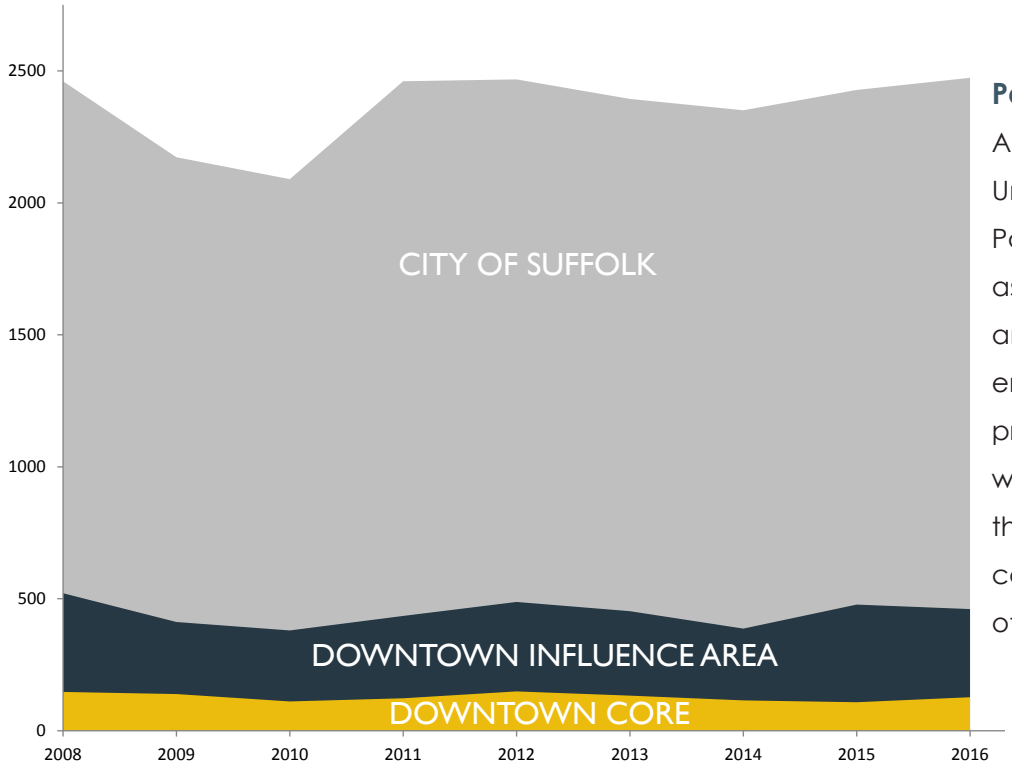
▼ FIGURE 2.2 OVERGROWN VEGETATION ALONG THE SIDE OF A BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN

FIGURE 2.3 PART I CRIME STATISTICS, 2008-2016



Part I Crime Defined:
According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting, Part I Crime includes criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

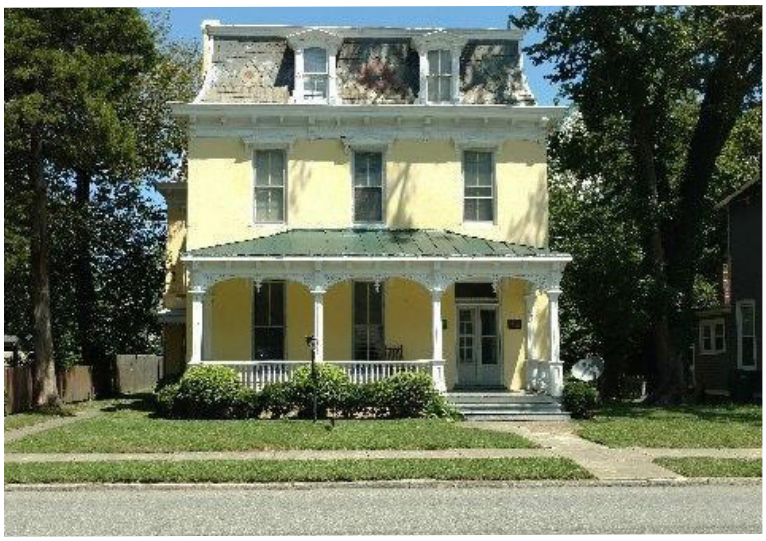
FIGURE 2.4 PART II CRIME STATISTICS, 2008-2016



Part II Crime Defined:
According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting, Part II Crime includes other assaults (simple), forgery and counterfeiting, fraud, embezzlement, stolen property, vandalism, weapons, driving under the influence, disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and other similar crimes.

▼ FIGURE 2.5 CULTURAL ARTS CENTER (SUFFOLK H.S.)

▼ FIGURE 2.6 216 BANK STREET



▼ FIGURE 2.7 PROFESSIONAL BUILDING (SUFFOLK SCHOOLS)

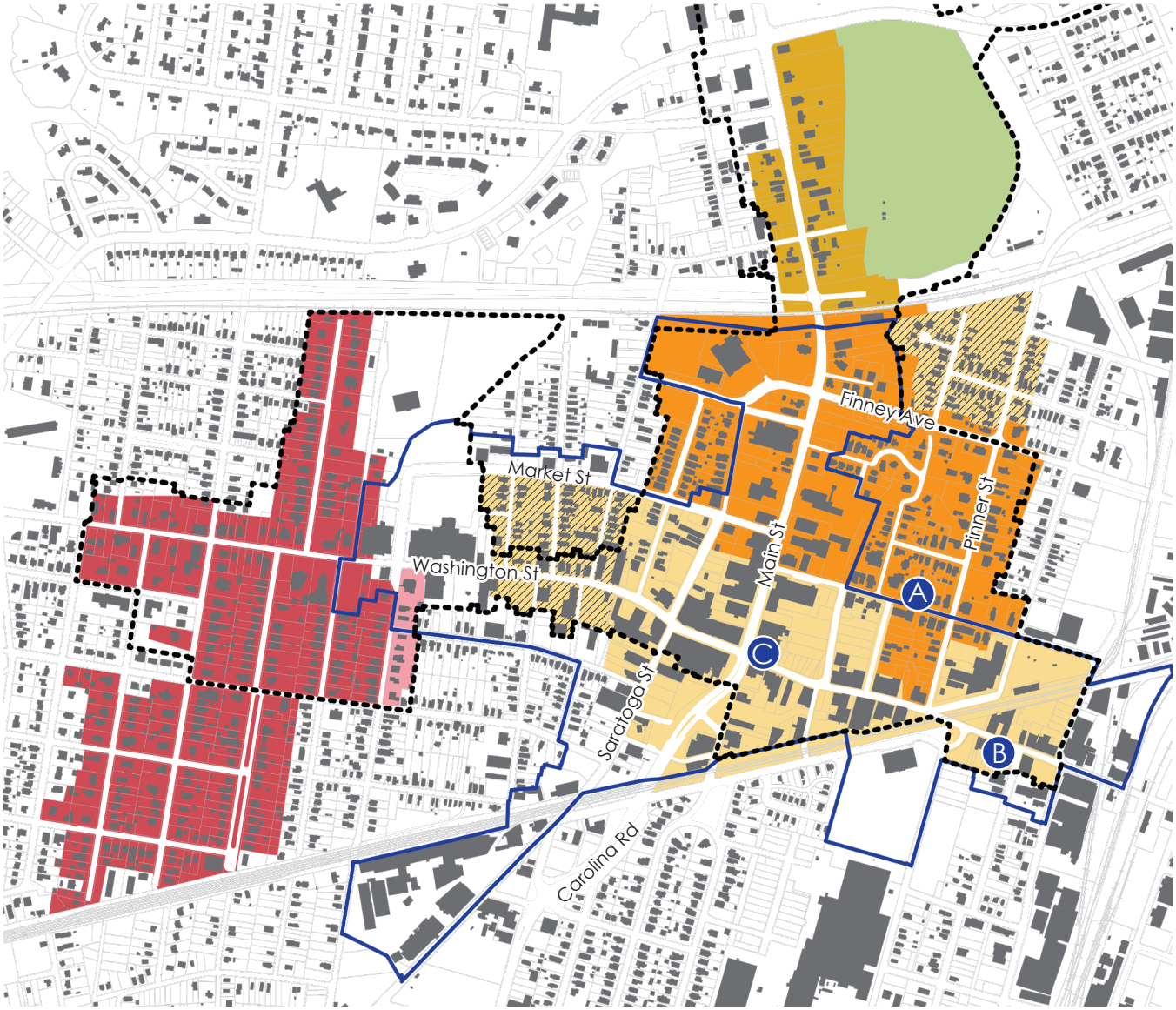
HISTORY & CULTURE

Downtown has considerable historic resources that have been recognized in two National Register Historic Districts in the West End and Downtown Suffolk proper, exhibiting a variety of architectural designs that span from the late 18th century through the 1930s. A locally designated Historic Conservation Overlay District covers the majority of those resources with some exceptions and expansions as displayed in Map 2.13.

National Register Districts may utilize the Federal Historic Tax Credits and a building must be listed or eligible for listing in the Virginia Landmarks Register to qualify for the State Historic Tax Credits. Individually listed structures within the downtown core include 216 Bank Street, which is a Second Empire apartment building (originally named the Holland House), the Phoenix Bank of Nansemond on East Washington Street, and the Professional Building located at the intersection of North Main Street and Washington Street.

Downtown Suffolk has preserved more of its history than a lot of similarly sized communities. The majority of the street wall along both Main and Washington Streets is composed of the original historic buildings, which greatly contribute to the identity of downtown. The scale, materials and details of these buildings represent the best of Suffolk's design, craftsmanship and culture. Continued protection and preservation of these resources is vital to the identity of Downtown Suffolk as a unique place.

MAP 2.13 HISTORIC DISTRICTS & STRUCTURES



MAP LEGEND

National Register Historic Districts

- Suffolk Historic District
- Suffolk Historic District 1999 Expansion
- Suffolk Historic District 2002 Expansion
- Suffolk Historic District 2004 Expansion
- West End Historic District
- West End Historic District Expansion
- Cedar Hill Cemetery

Individually Listed Historic Structures

- A 216 Bank St
- B Phoenix Bank of Nansemond
- C Professional Building

- Historic Overlay District
- Downtown Core
- Building Footprint
- Parcels

NORTH

1/4 MILE

GREENSPACE / OPEN SPACE / ENVIRONMENTAL

Parks and Open Space

The core of downtown has a limited amount of urban parks and open space. Damiani Square, formerly known as Character Corner, and the Courthouse pedestrian plaza linking Main Street to the parking lot are the two major public spaces in downtown. A nice small walking trail and park surround the stormwater detention pond at the Health and Human Services building on the southern edge of downtown. The largest green open space is the Cedar Hill Cemetery just to the north of downtown, which also contains a portion of the Seaboard Coastline Trail that traverses the cemetery and connects to a multi-use path along Prentis Street. In addition, several parks are located immediately adjacent to the downtown core.

There is no off-street community scale gathering place in all of downtown. Festivals, parades and events are now held on Main and Washington Streets, requiring the closure of both streets during big events. In a city with limited access due to the many railroad crossings, major event closures can become a problem. Although not in the immediate downtown core, public events are also held at Constant's Wharf Park and Marina on the Nansemond Riverfront. While the river is a great site for events, the economic impact is limited as there are few places that event goers can easily walk to visit, shop, eat and/or spend money either before or after the event.

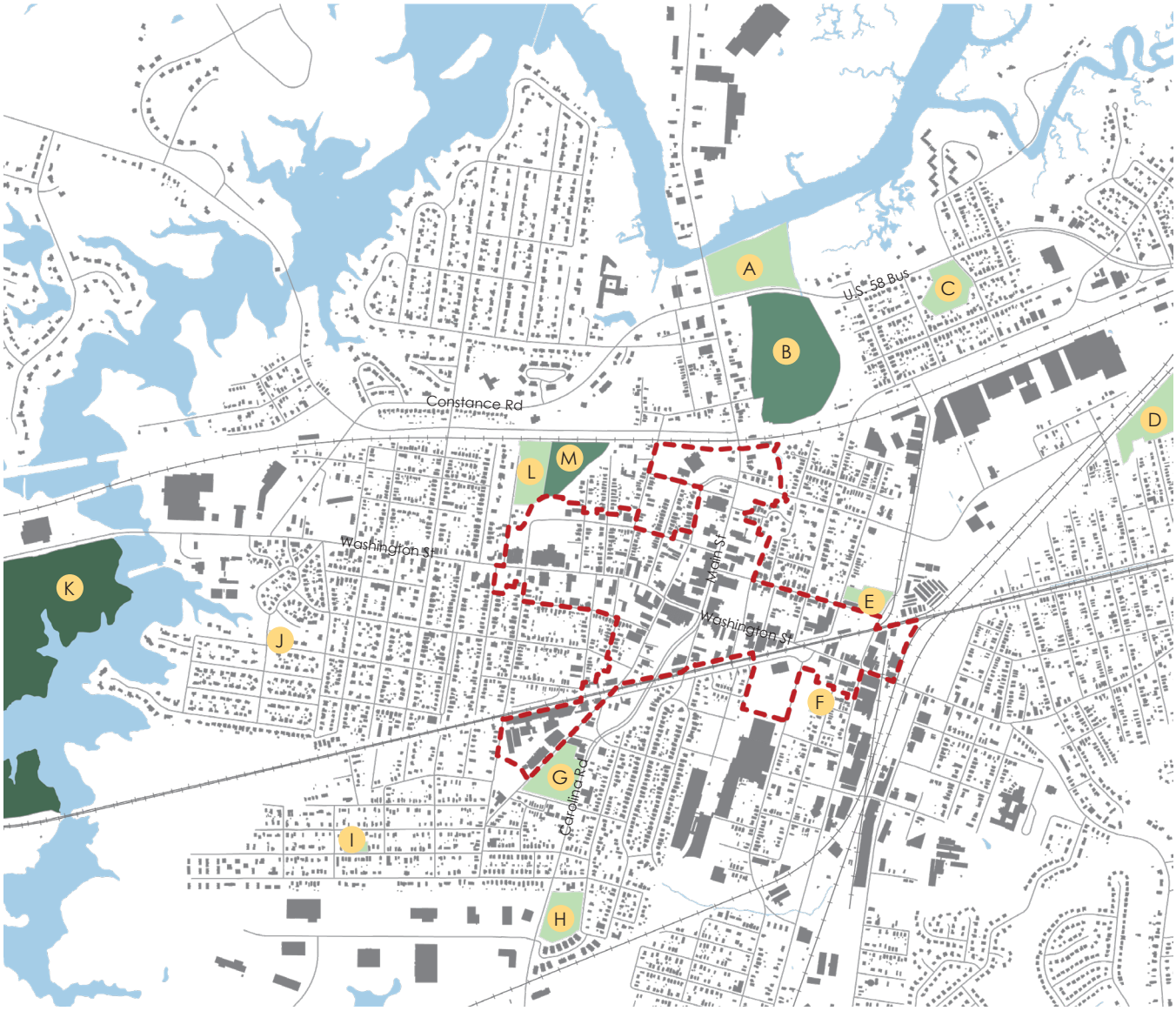
The current downtown farmers' market falls into the same category. Although held behind the Visitors' Center in a nicely designed pavilion, there are very limited opportunities to extend a visit to the market into a shopping or dining experience in the core downtown because of the site's isolation and distance from other destinations..

Greenways/Trails

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan recommends improving the existing downtown trail sections by widening the narrow trail sections on Prentis Street; adding bike and pedestrian bollards for added safety in strategic locations; and defining a path through the train station park with amenities and coordinated signage. The plan also calls for the improvement of the connection to North Main Street by extending the trail from the existing pedestrian bridge (adjacent to the Kimberly Bridge) to the existing sidewalk at Wendy's Restaurant. Another opportunity exists to develop a bike/pedestrian-friendly crossing at East Constance Road to connect the spur trail to Constant's Wharf Park. The plan recommends identifying funding to design and construct an extension of the trail west from the West Constance Road/Prentis Street intersection (4a) and east from Moore Avenue (4b).

A sidepath is encouraged along Holly Lawn Parkway from Main Street to Lake Meade Park and a study is proposed to develop an on-street bicycle loop through the downtown with connections to the Seaboard Coastline Trail at Moore Avenue, Pine Street, and East Constance Road. As downtown bicycle and

MAP 2.14 PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES



MAP LEGEND

- A Constant's Wharf Public Park & Marina
- B Cedar Hill Cemetery
- C Colburn Park
- D Cypress Park
- E Joyner Park
- F Tynes Park
- G Peanut Park
- H Planters Park
- I Ida Easter Park
- J Lakeside Park
- K Suffolk Golf Course
- L Wellons Park
- M Oak Lawn Cemetery

Building Footprint

Water Feature

Streets

NORTH

1/2 MILE

pedestrian enhancements are proposed in the future, bicycling and walking paths or routes with signage through the downtown should include amenities at important destinations for people walking and riding bicycles.

INFRASTRUCTURE [WATER & SEWER]

A high level scan of the existing sewer and water infrastructure, mapping of both, and discussions with the Public Utilities department staff indicate that there is adequate infrastructure to serve new development in downtown. Depending on the scale and exact location of any new proposed developments – a more thorough infrastructure analysis would need to be undertaken to confirm its availability, capacity and level of service. In addition, any proposed street improvements may present an opportunity to replace aging infrastructure in some downtown locations. In accordance with the City's policies, the sewer and water infrastructure maps are not published in this report.

OPPORTUNITY SITES

Resistance to Change Analysis

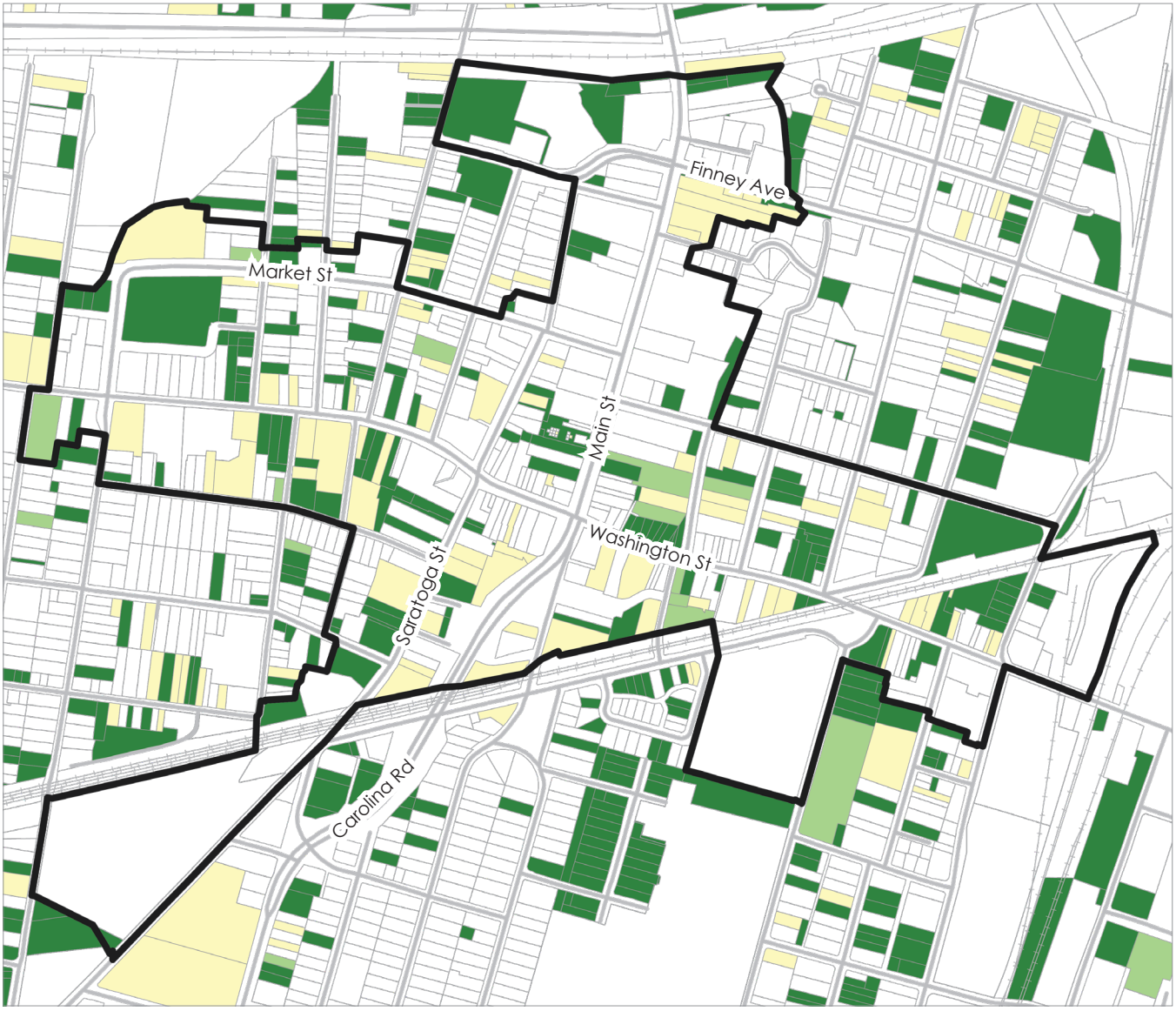
A resistance to change analysis is a simple way of identifying sites that may have potential to redevelop. The analysis looks for those properties where the value of the ground is greater than any improvement (building) on top of it. The analysis highlights vacant, privately held land where any buildings are small/undervalued, land devoted to public/private parking lots and property held by the City but yet to be put to its highest and best use. It excludes historic landmarks, religious uses, cemeteries, parks and other properties that have limited potential to develop. By linking and assembling properties that fall into one of the above redevelopment categories, areas of opportunity are readily identifiable for redevelopment in downtown.

Opportunity Sites Map

In addition to opportunity sites identified through the resistance to change mapping and the overall analysis, other opportunity sites were identified with the assistance of City staff that may be ripe for redevelopment in downtown. As displayed in Map 2.16, opportunity sites were identified for closer examination during the master planning process and the Design Downtown Workshops. The opportunity sites included the following:

- Golden Peanut Triangle
- 400 Block area of West Washington Street (City owned property)
- Public Works site
- Clay Street site
- Virginian-Pilot Building
- Courthouse Plaza/Pocket Park
- Courthouse Parking Area
- Phoenix Bank Block
- Moore Avenue

MAP 2.15 RESISTANCE TO CHANGE



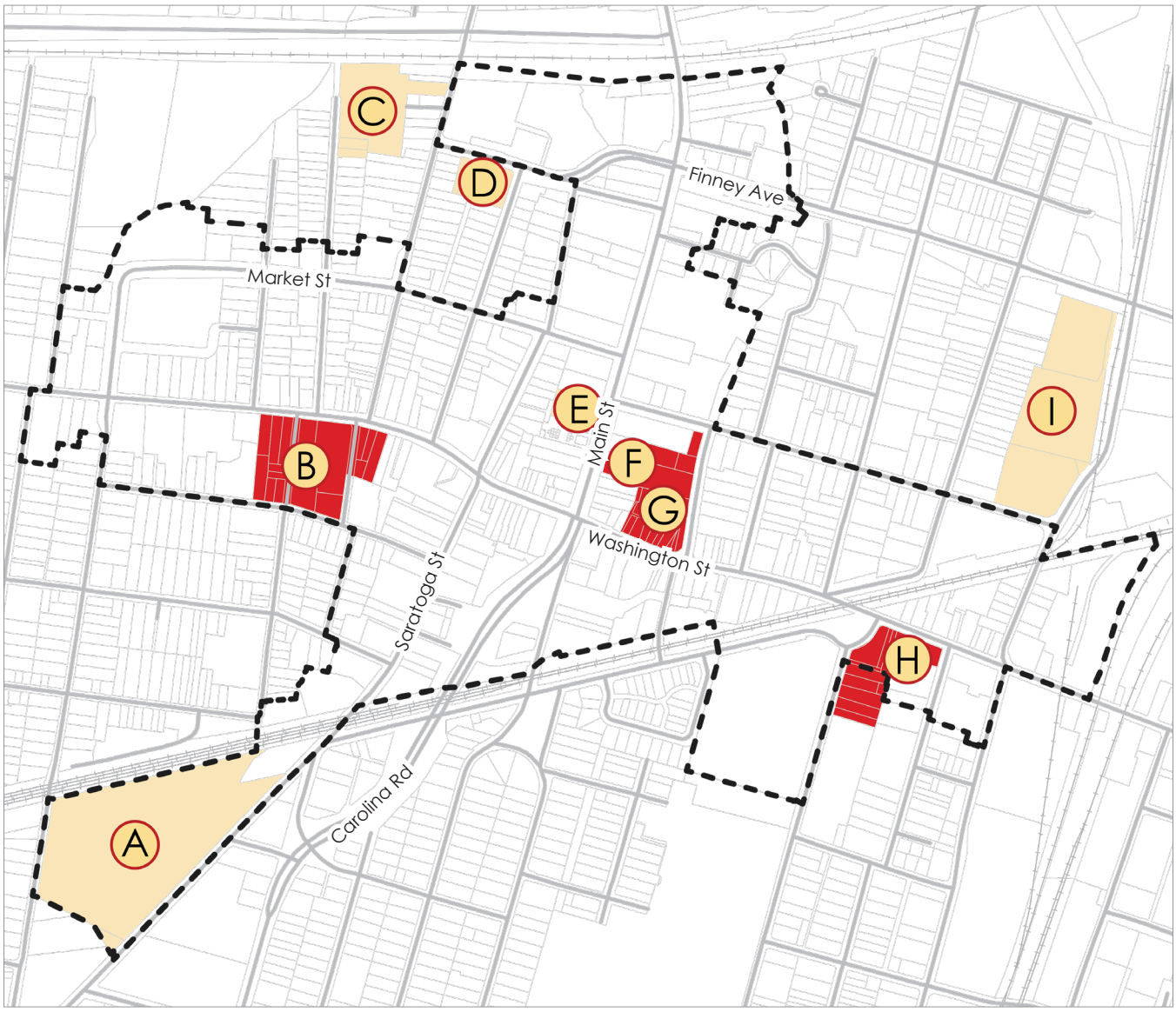
MAP LEGEND

- Land Value is 50 - 85% of Total Parcel Value
- Land Value is 85 - 99% of Total Parcel Value
- Land Value is 100% of Total Parcel Value
- Downtown Core
- Parcels

NORTH

1,000 FEET

MAP 2.16 OPPORTUNITY SITES



MAP LEGEND

	OPPORTUNITY SITES	ACRES
A	Golden Peanut Triangle	9.8
B	400 Block W. Washington	3.5
C	Public Works Site	2.6
D	Clay Street	0.8
E	Virginian-Pilot Building	0.5
F	Courthouse Plaza	0.3
G	Courthouse Parking Area	2.9
H	Phoenix Bank Block	3.3
I	Moore Avenue	6.1

- Primary Sites
- Secondary Sites
- Downtown Core
- Roads
- Parcels

NORTH

1,000 FEET

Recent Redevelopments

In addition to redevelopment, there are often opportunities to reuse, re-purpose and refill existing buildings with some of the unmet market demand in Suffolk. This has been very successful in the past, particularly with residential redevelopment of second floors above storefronts and in rehabilitated structures. The Monument Companies and others have been very successful using a combination of tax credits, equity and financing to undertake 6 multi-unit residential projects in downtown. These projects have helped to create additional demand for goods, services and food in downtown.

▼ TABLE 2.1 DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS SINCE 2008

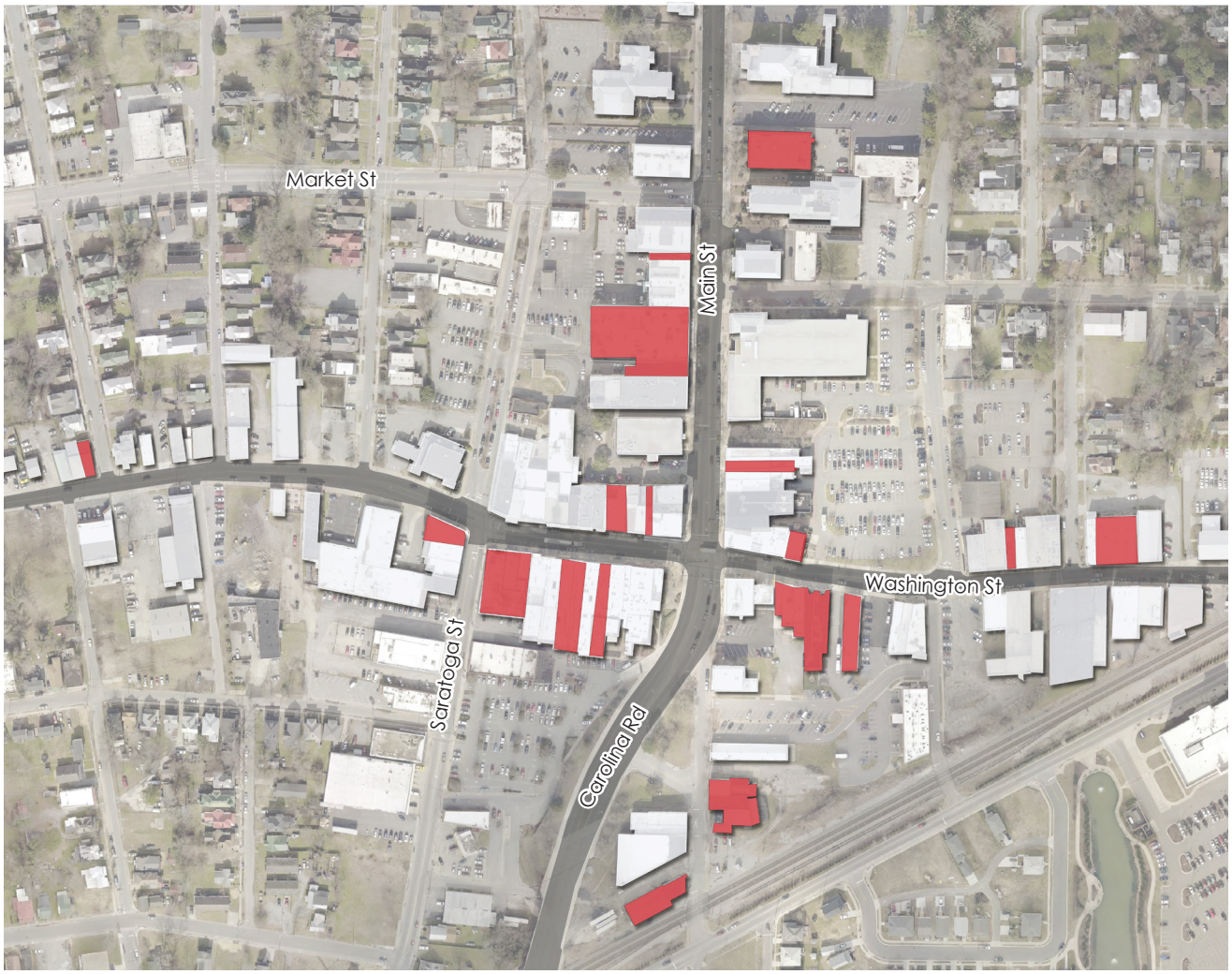
RESIDENTIAL PROJECT	RESIDENTIAL UNITS
East Point Plaza	32
Washington Square Apartments	68
Seventy-Five Place	16
The Lofts @ One-Eleven	26
Montgomery Lofts on Main	13
Jefferson School Lofts	16
TOTAL	**171**

Retail Vacancy Map

Map 2.17 identifies all of the ground floor vacancies in downtown along Main Street and Washington Street at the time of the Design Downtown Workshops held in June of 2017. "Retail follows rooftops" is the old saying. It appears to be true in downtown Suffolk. There is currently approximately 75,000 square feet of vacant ground floor space in downtown along Washington Street and Main Street. This represents about 20% of all ground floor opportunities. New residential developments in recent years have helped to fill up these spaces, but more demand is required to complete the effort.

One of the goals of the Master Plan is to consider how Suffolk can capture or create the demand to fill these vacant ground floor spaces, program downtown open spaces to draw customers back downtown and redevelop opportunity sites to meet the market for office, commercial, residential and institutional uses.

MAP 2.17 GROUND FLOOR RETAIL VACANCY



MAP LEGEND

Ground Floor Vacancy

Ground Floor Occupied

NORTH

MARKET OVERVIEW

A brief market overview of the potential demand for residential, office and retail was prepared to help identify opportunities for downtown to absorb development demand being experienced across the City of Suffolk as a whole. The overview is based upon extensive research and analysis contained in the 2014 Fiscal Impact Analysis for the city, the review of demographic, economic, housing and retail reports produced by ESRI for the downtown influence area and the downtown core, Hoovers Business Database, US Census Bureau, and the State of the Region 2016 data and projections. Information gathered during the listening sessions with city staff, real estate professionals, developers, and property owners also helped inform the market overview.

In 2016, the study area population was just over 8,000 people, while the city population as a whole was 90,717 people. The five year population projection by ESRI for the study area was nearly a 4% increase to 8,312 people, while the city is projected to grow nearly 6% to 96,931 people by 2021, which is slightly higher than the 95,247 people projected by 2021 in the Comprehensive Plan. The city in its entirety is growing, with an expected increase of population to 132,000 people by 2040. Within the study area, there were 3,172 households in 2016 with a median household income of $35,812. The median household income for the entire city was $66,037.

In the downtown core study area, as previously discussed, six new downtown housing projects have been developed since 2008. The six projects accounted for over 170 new residential housing units in downtown over an eight year timeframe.

A conservative 10-year estimate of the supportable square footage for residential, retail and office was developed for the purposes of the master plan as displayed in Table 2.2. The market potential for the downtown core relied heavily on the 2014 Fiscal Impact Analysis in determining the supportable square footage of potential demand for the identified uses below. As mentioned above, the market potential numbers below are conservative estimates, accounting for only 50% of the potential demand identified in the 2014 Fiscal Impact Analysis. Finally, the listening sessions revealed that the hotel/hospitality market potential in downtown was currently being met.

▼ TABLE 2.2 TEN YEAR MARKET POTENTIAL

USE	MARKET POTENTIAL
Residential	100 to 300 Units
Retail	40,000 to 60,000 SF
Office	35,000 to 55,000 SF
Hotel / Hospitality	Meeting current demands

3

MASTER PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Downtown Suffolk Master Plan is an outgrowth of the background research and analysis, public meetings, Design Downtown Workshops, and information learned during listening sessions with business owners, real estate professionals, city staff and other technical experts in various fields of interest related to the downtown. The key themes that emerged from the downtown design workshops and the overall process included the following:

- ***Improve downtown entertainment options*** by creating a public event space for movies, live music, and a variety of festivals and events.
- ***Facilitate business growth*** by establishing a clearer approval processes, better parking management, more effective business signage, and small business support and formation.
- ***Provide avenues for education*** that may include a magnet school, technical and community college, and business incubators/mentorship programs.
- ***Redevelop and clean-up underutilized properties*** by identifying opportunities for redevelopment, facade grants, retail strategy, tactical urbanism, and the continued enforcement of appropriate historic preservation and maintenance to properties.
- ***Improve public spaces*** by installing new lighting, landscaping, programming, public art, and new public space/access to the river.

The Master Plan for downtown was developed to address each of these major themes and other issues identified during the process. Specifically, the following major recommendations outlined below were prepared as part of the master plan process. Each recommendation is discussed in greater detail in this section forming the Downtown Suffolk Master Plan. The implementation plan that contains the next steps and actions is discussed in Section 4.

- Actively pursue identified short and long term redevelopment opportunities
- Design and implement a new streetscape on North Main Street
- Improve the management of parking
- Create a Downtown wayfinding system
- Improve the Downtown gateways
- Conduct a Safety/CPTED evaluation
- Develop a retail recruitment strategy
- Explore the creation of an Arts/Creative District
- Implement Washington Street Interventions/Placemaking initiatives
- Evaluate and institute regulatory reform as appropriate
- Improve the management and programming of Downtown

Downtown Suffolk will become the thriving centerpiece of the City.

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

One of the key areas of recommendation was the identification and preparation of redevelopment opportunities within downtown. During the research and analysis phase, potential sites were identified that were ripe for development based upon the market potential, site development constraints and opportunities (infrastructure availability, ownership, etc), and public input received during the process. The goal of each redevelopment site recommendation is to:

1. Create new public spaces that add vitality to the downtown, creating a welcoming atmosphere for new customers and investors,
2. Capture a portion of the market demand potential for residential, retail and office,
3. Return city owned land, where possible, back to the private sector, and
4. Leverage existing city assets, such as parking, public buildings and uses, and existing plans to maximize investment and value over the long-term

▼ FIGURE 3.1 SHORT-TERM REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES (IMAGE IS ORIENTED WITH SOUTH AT THE TOP)

SHORT-TERM REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

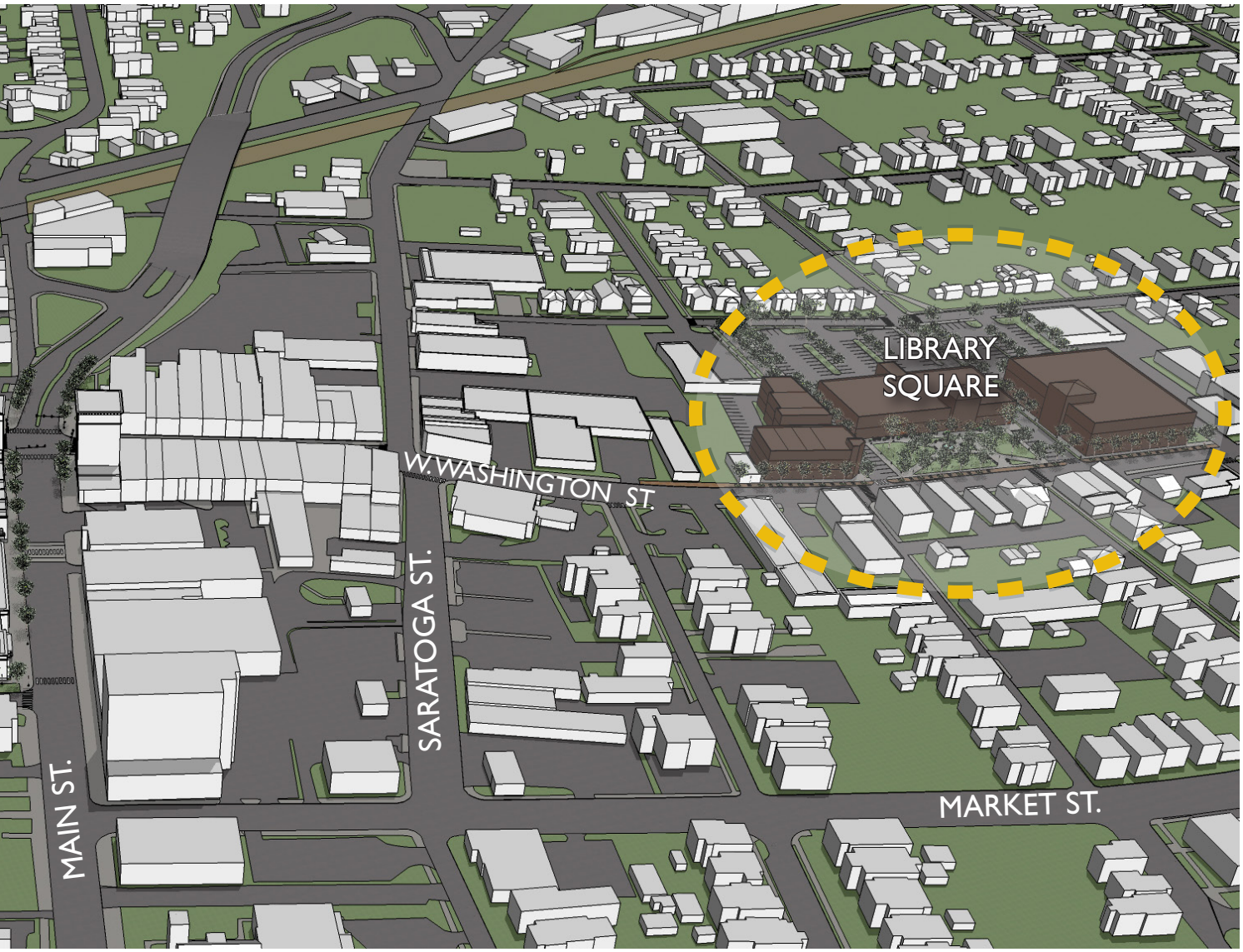
While there were sites identified during the process where development opportunities existed, three primary sites and opportunities were identified that met as many of the key objectives as possible to help improve downtown as outlined below and displayed in Figure 3.1.

Short-term Opportunity Sites and Development Concepts

1. The Courthouse Site (Courthouse parking area)
   - The ***Festival and Market Square*** entertainment concept

2. 300 and 400 Block of West Washington Street
   - The ***Library Square*** development concept

3. 300 Block of East Washington Street
   - The ***Mixed Use Residential & Historic Rehabilitation*** concept



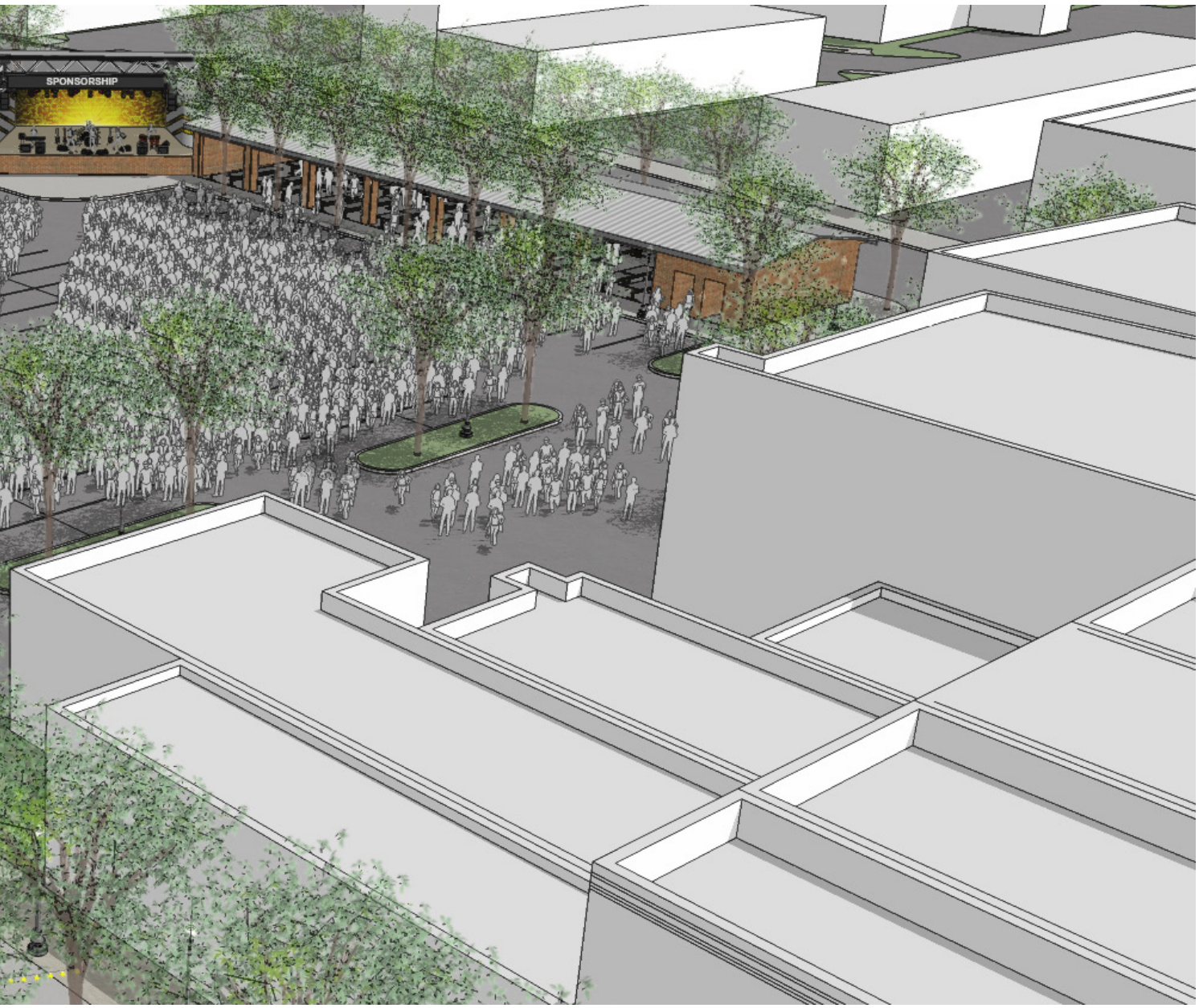
THE COURTHOUSE SITE - FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE

The City owns the existing courthouse parking lot on East Washington Street, which is currently underutilized and vacant during evenings and weekends. It is well positioned to be a potential location for community events, connecting to Main Street through the courthouse plaza and frontage along East Washington Street. Event attendees can filter from this site back onto Main Street or out along East Washington Street during and after events at this site. The courthouse plaza area as displayed in Figure 3.3 becomes an outdoor dining and beer garden space for after event gatherings and smaller performances and other activities that occur when the larger event site is not programmed for an event. This plaza/outdoor dining area creates a unique space and experience in the city and the region.

▼ FIGURE 3.2 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE AT THE COURTHOUSE PARKING LOT [EVENT SPACE CONCEPT]

The street edge building wall along East Washington Street is currently disrupted by the expansive asphalt courthouse parking lot and presents a visual gap to pedestrians walking from North Main Street to Commerce Street. This vacant area discourages potential shoppers/patrons from continuing the walk down East Washington Street. Given the current success of the existing Farmers' Market at the Visitors' Center and the public's desire for more events and "things to do" in downtown, this site has the greatest potential to become a new event venue, a new home for the Farmer's Market and offer the infrastructure – a market shed, stage, plaza, bathrooms and storage – that can be used to incubate new retail, new events and become the city's home for providing entertainment and activities in downtown.

*THIS IMAGE DISPLAYS A VIEW FROM THE COURTHOUSE SOUTHEAST TO EAST WASHINGTON STREET.



The goal is to make it easy to plan events in downtown. By providing the permanent infrastructure to potential event organizers, the city can incubate new events, activities and promoters. It relieves promoters of having to secure temporary bathroom facilities, generators, stages and seating. It reduces the need to close streets in downtown for weekend events and yet still functions during the week as courthouse parking. All of this new activity can increase demand for retail, restaurants, housing and eventually may become an amenity that attracts new office users. It can draw new residents into downtown for the first time and give existing residents an opportunity to reintroduce themselves to what downtown has to offer. It is a downtown demand generator.

The stage has all the infrastructure needed to put on events – power, lighting and amplification. It has the potential to be used as a major sponsorship opportunity. On the backside of the stage – the city could install public art, a schedule of upcoming events and provide a great location for naming rights visibility.

In addition, one of the structure's wings, along East Washington Street, becomes a new market shed to house the farmers' market, vending stalls during events/concerts and even a retail incubator that can be used as a low cost entry point for new retailers that have an idea or product they want to test in the downtown market. The shed is aligned with the street edge to repair the gap in the street wall and help to draw shoppers further down East Washington Street. The other smaller wing off Commerce Street functions primarily as the back of the house – providing bathrooms, storage, a dressing room and mechanical space that serves the rest of the complex.

▼ FIGURE 3.3 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE VIEW FROM NORTH MAIN STREET [BEER GARDEN CONCEPT]

▼ FIGURE 3.4 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE VIEW FROM EAST WASHINGTON STREET AT COMMERCE STREET [SPONSORSHIP & EVENT SIGNAGE]

▼ FIGURE 3.5 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE VIEW ALONG EAST WASHINGTON STREET [FARMER'S MARKET CONCEPT]

The overall project may require minor regrading and repaving of the existing parking lot to slope gently down to the permanent stage at the corner of East Washington and Commerce Streets. No permanent seating is provided in the concept. When not in use, the seating area will maintain its primary function as a parking lot for the Courthouse. The Judge/Sheriff parking would experience no changes, while the remainder of the parking would experience a loss of ± 40 spaces. The concept explores demolishing the former Real Estate Assessor's building across Commerce Street, which would help regain any lost spaces.

Lastly, a portion of the existing parking lot that aligns directly with the existing courthouse plaza area that is proposed for an outdoor dining and smaller outdoor venue, becomes an extension of the plaza with new trees, decorative paving, lighting, power and water infrastructure. This area of the event venue can house market tents, food trucks or other uses that can operate when the venue is hosting a concert or can work independently of music events when the parking lot is functioning.

▼ FIGURE 3.6 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE [EXISTING CONDITIONS]

FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE PROGRAM

- A Outdoor dining / beer garden / smaller outdoor event venue
- B Coordinated tent sites for festival vendors
- C New pedestrian connection to parking on Commerce Street
- D New parking area (removal of the former Real Estate Assessor's building)
- E Performance viewing/seating and parking during the week
- F Performance stage
- G Restrooms
- H Market Hall
- I Signage and public art

▼ FIGURE 3.7 FESTIVAL & MARKET SQUARE [PROPOSED CONDITIONS]

300 - 400 BLOCK OF WEST WASHINGTON STREET - LIBRARY SQUARE

The City has assembled a ±3.5 acre site along West Washington Street as a home for a new library. Together with the new city hall, this site has the potential to anchor a revitalization of West Washington Street and improve the connection to the downtown core. This one has more space than the Library should need and offers an opportunity to think differently about how public investments can leverage new private investments as part of the redevelopment of the entire 300 and 400 Block of West Washington Street.

One way that many communities have used public investment to leverage private activities is by creating new active public spaces. This project proposes creating a new Library Square fronting on West Washington Street. This square becomes the heart of the project. The library fronts directly on the square

▼ FIGURE 3.8 300 & 400 BLOCK OF WEST WASHINGTON ST [LIBRARY SQUARE CONCEPT]

and two additional redevelopment sites bracket the square just across Lee and South Streets. How the city desires to develop the sites and how the private sector plans those redevelopment sites may be highly influenced by what kind of library is constructed and programmed.

The library of the future is changing. The emergence of the shared space/shared economy, new technologies, unique educational programming, and a greater appreciation of local history/genealogy have all driven the re-imagining of the traditional library. This plan explores three potential ways that the programming of the library can be directly tied to the redevelopment of the remaining portions of this site.

▼ FIGURE 3.9 THE NEW MODERN LIBRARY WORD CLOUD

▼ FIGURE 3.10 NEW LIBRARY IN PETERSBURG, VA

Three Program Concepts

1. A Focus on Education – This theme draws on the creation and co-location of a new downtown magnet school as an amenity to draw families to live downtown, a new Suffolk History Museum to tell the City's story to visitors and the relocation of a branch of a local community/technical college to train new employees for jobs in downtown and throughout the community.

2. A Focus on Small Business – This theme focuses on supporting all the stages of new business formation by providing a small business center to guide entrepreneurs in start-ups, shared maker/kitchen spaces to provide the required infrastructure for testing ideas, small scale flex space for new businesses to grow into and lastly live/work units for those existing small businesses that want to move into downtown.

3. A Focus on Living – This theme looks at how a library and square can become an amenity for new housing attraction by providing amenities like shared tools, musical instruments and community meeting spaces. The adjacent sites can be developed to target young people who want to live downtown in more affordable micro-units or empty-nesters who may want to downsize into townhouses – both who want to take advantage of the new entertainment options at the event venue or the burgeoning new restaurant scene.

▼ FIGURE 3.11 300 & 400 BLOCK OF WEST WASHINGTON ST [EDUCATION FOCUSED CONCEPT]

▼ FIGURE 3.12 300 & 400 BLOCK OF WEST WASHINGTON ST [SMALL BUSINESS FOCUSED CONCEPT]

▼ FIGURE 3.13 300 & 400 BLOCK OF WEST WASHINGTON ST [RESIDENTIAL FOCUSED CONCEPT]

MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL & HISTORIC REHABILITATION ON EAST WASHINGTON

The City has also assembled a redevelopment site on East Washington Street behind the Phoenix Bank Block and along Culloden Street; this site lies within the community known as the Fairgrounds. This site could help to catalyze new activity in the eastern half of downtown. Recently developed apartments across the street at the Lofts at Eastpoint have been successful at achieving market rents and have proven there is a market in this part of downtown. The Fairgrounds redevelopment of new single family housing has also helped to stabilize and catalyze this site's redevelopment.

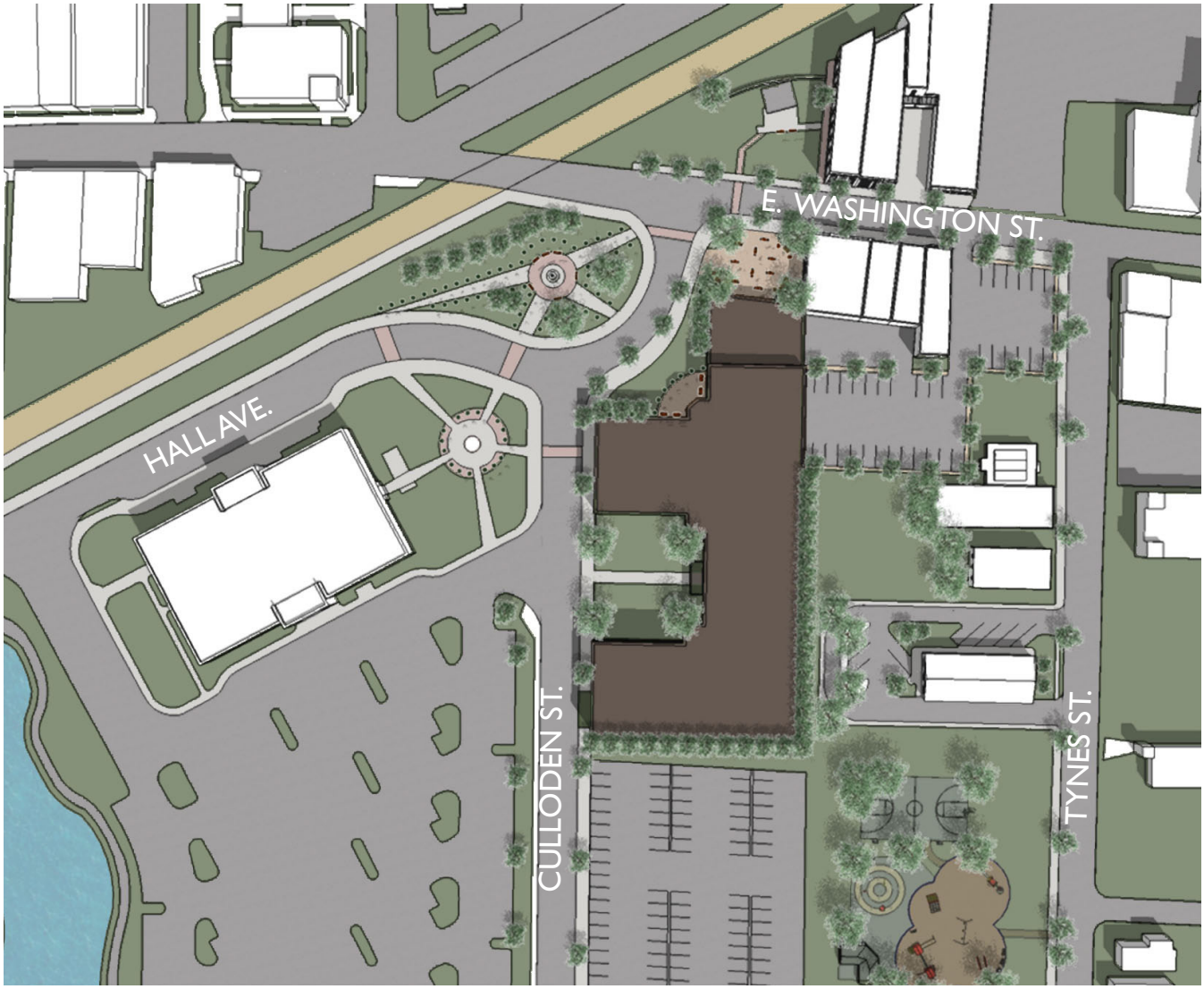
The Phoenix Bank of Nansemond has an important cultural significance in the African-American community. As part of any redevelopment, the entire historic block should be evaluated for acquisition, studied for potential rehabilitation and if feasible, preserved as part of any project on the back part of the site.

▼ FIGURE 3.14 300 BLOCK OF EAST WASHINGTON ST [EXISTING CONDITIONS]

A distinct benefit of this site is that the existing Health and Human Services building parking lot is rarely full and can be leveraged to provide nighttime shared parking for any apartments developed on this site – a real advantage to maximizing density, lowering the development cost and providing some limited revenue through a long term parking lease. In addition, there is potential for a parking lot lease on nearby Liberty Street.

The concept plan calls for a multifamily residential development of approximately 142 units on three floors with a parking level at grade under the building. In addition, the parking areas behind the Phoenix Bank Block would be managed and utilized to the fullest potential in support of this redevelopment.

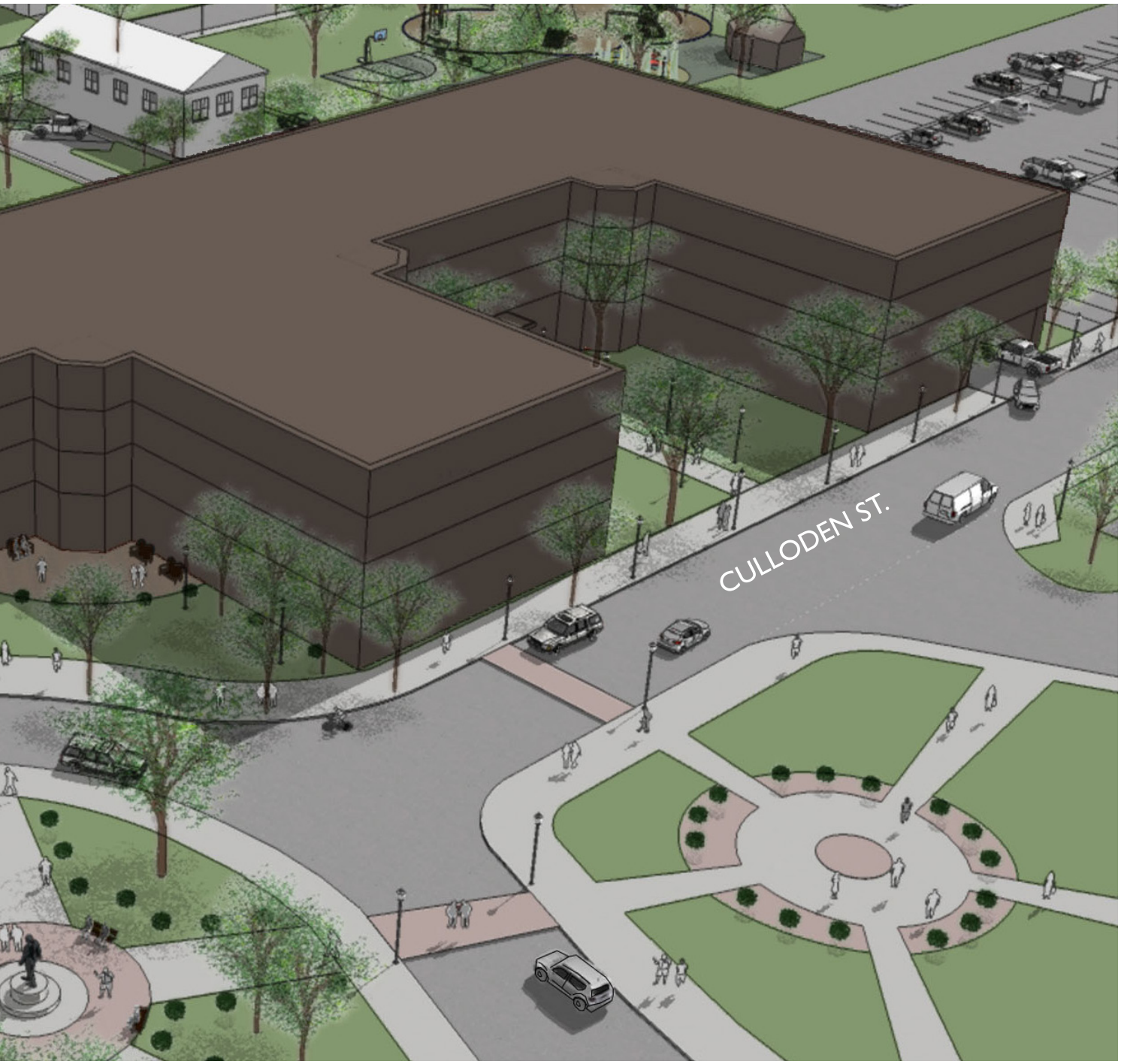
▼ FIGURE 3.15 300 BLOCK OF EAST WASHINGTON ST
[MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL & HISTORIC REHAB CONCEPT]



This concept creates a new courtyard facing the intersection of East Washington and Culloden Streets. Here the ground floor could have some limited retail/restaurant space that takes advantage of the adjacent public space. The new courtyard coupled with the implementation of the previous plan for Carver Circle improvements work to create a new gateway and amenity along East Washington Street.

▼ FIGURE 3.16 300 BLOCK OF EAST WASHINGTON ST [MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL & HISTORIC REHAB CONCEPT]

This redevelopment concept creates a visual and physical connection to surrounding green spaces at the Health and Human Services building site, Tynes Park, the Lofts at East Point and the future Carver Circle. The connected open spaces will help strengthen the sense of place within the East Washington Street area of downtown.



Lastly and perhaps most importantly, 142 new apartments at this location would add a significant amount of purchasing power in support of downtown retail and restaurants. It would nearly double the number of new housing units established in downtown since 2008.

▼ FIGURE 3.17 300 BLOCK OF EAST WASHINGTON ST [EXISTING CONDITIONS, PHOENIX BANK FOREGROUND]

The Phoenix Bank of Nansemond is a two-story structure built in 1921. The bank was founded by a group of African-American entrepreneurs in 1919 and served the African-American farmers and laborers of Suffolk and surrounding Nansemond County. It was the only African-American bank in Suffolk during that time and survived until 1931.

▼ FIGURE 3.18 300 BLOCK OF EAST WASHINGTON ST [HISTORIC REHABILITATION CONCEPT]

LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITY SITES

In addition to the three short-term opportunity sites, five additional sites were identified for long-term consideration. This plan provides a brief overview of two of the long-term sites; the historic Golden Peanut Triangle site, and the former Virginian-Pilot building across from the courthouse on North Main Street.

▼ MAP 3.1 LONG-TERM OPPORTUNITY SITES

MAP LEGEND

- A Golden Peanut Triangle
- B Public Works Site
- C Clay Street
- D Virginian-Pilot Building
- E Moore Avenue

- Building Footprints
- Parking Lots
- City Hall
- Downtown Core

NORTH

1,000 FEET

GOLDEN PEANUT TRIANGLE SITE

This 10 acre site, which was the home of the historic Suffolk Peanut Company facility, is located at 303 South Saratoga Street. The site was originally planned to be revitalized with historic tax credits into 290 apartments and 10,000 square feet of office and retail space by the Monument Companies, who have completed four residential projects in downtown Suffolk. However, the Monument Companies recently changed their plans and sold the site in January of 2018 to four local business partners in Suffolk. The new master plan for this site has not yet been revealed.

▼ FIGURE 3.19 CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN FORMERLY ENVISIONED BY THE MONUMENT COMPANIES

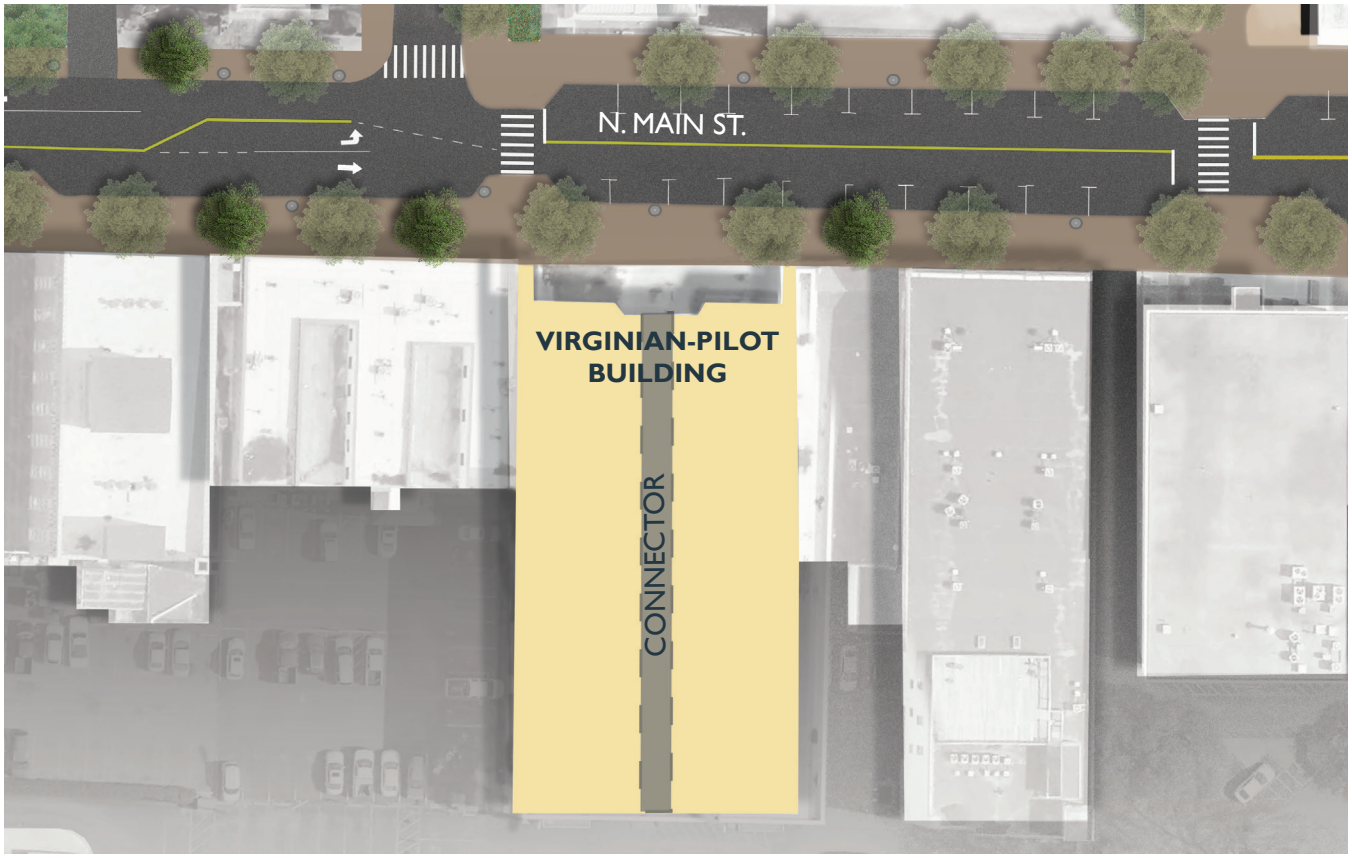
▼ FIGURE 3.20 CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF BUILDINGS ALONG SOUTH SARATOGA STREET

VIRGINIAN-PILOT BUILDING

The Virginian-Pilot Building is located near the center of the North Main Street block across from the Courthouse. This building is a prime location for redevelopment along North Main Street and presents a unique opportunity to provide a public oriented corridor connector through the center of the building that can create a safe and enclosed pedestrian connection to parking lots along North Saratoga that support downtown. This pedestrian connection will help deliver potential customers to North Main Street and to businesses that may occupy the building in the future.

▼ FIGURE 3.21 THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT BUILDING

▼ FIGURE 3.21 THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT INTERIOR PEDESTRIAN CONNECTOR [PLAN VIEW]



NEW STREETSCAPE ON NORTH MAIN STREET

What kind of streetscape would work best on North Main? It's not just about making the street look better. It's about improving the performance of the street as a retail center, a dining destination and a safe, welcoming space for customers, visitors, employees and residents. It has been years since the city has made a major investment in the street. It's clear that there is a renewed interest in downtown Suffolk. New private investments in housing, the arts, brewing, dining and events are all working to increase demand. The next step to accelerate and channel that private investment is for the community to undertake this plan and develop a new streetscape concept for Main Street.

EXISTING MAIN STREET CONDITIONS

It has been nearly 20 years since the last streetscape plan was implemented on North Main Street. Typically shopping area streetscapes, both public and private, need to be refreshed or replaced every 20-30 years. Trees die, street lamps need replacement, sidewalks have been over patched and new grease traps need to be installed. Some of the trees are reaching the end of their useful life – branches are dying and roots are likely compacted. Some of the trees that have died have not yet been replaced. The sidewalks themselves have seen many repairs and various attempts have been made to match the exposed aggregate style paving. Some sidewalks have heaved creating trip hazards. The existing dimensions of North Main Street are displayed on the page that follows and listed in more detail below.

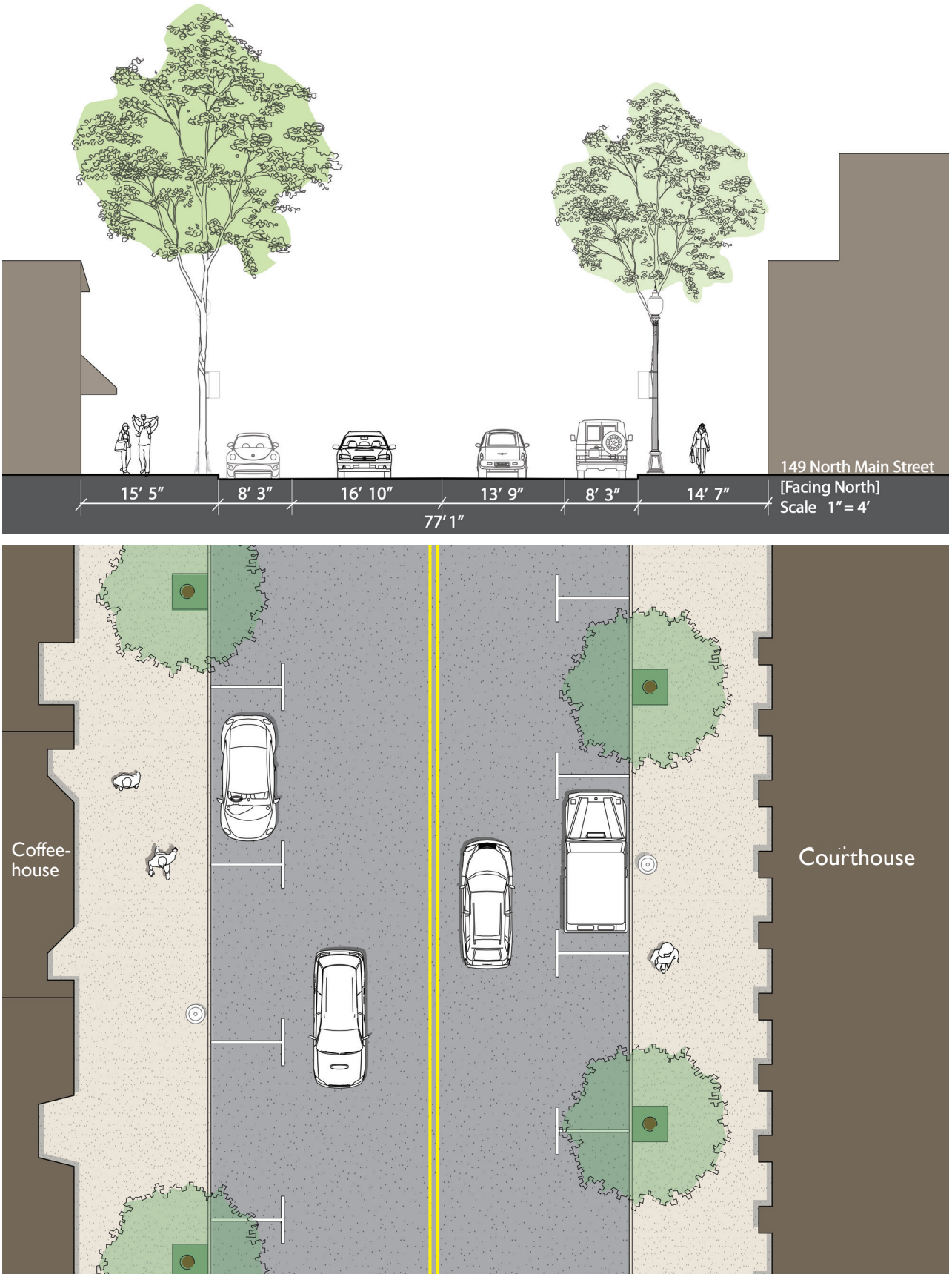
- The entire Right of Way (R-O-W) building front to building front is approximately 77' 1"
- Sidewalks are between 14' 7" and 15' 5"
- Travel lanes are between 16' 10" and 13' 9"
- Parking Lanes are 8' 3"

The existing 77' of R-O-W assigns the following percentages to the type of general space:

- 61% of the space to the movement or storage of vehicles – 47' 1"
- 39% of the space to the Movement of people – 30'

▼ FIGURE 3.22 COLLAGE OF SIDEWALK IMAGES ON NORTH MAIN STREET

▼ FIGURE 3.23 NORTH MAIN STREET [EXISTING CONDITIONS, SECTION & PLAN VIEWS]



PROPOSED MAIN STREET CONDITIONS

In meetings with the public, retailers and restaurants, the following issues and goals rose to the top of the discussion.

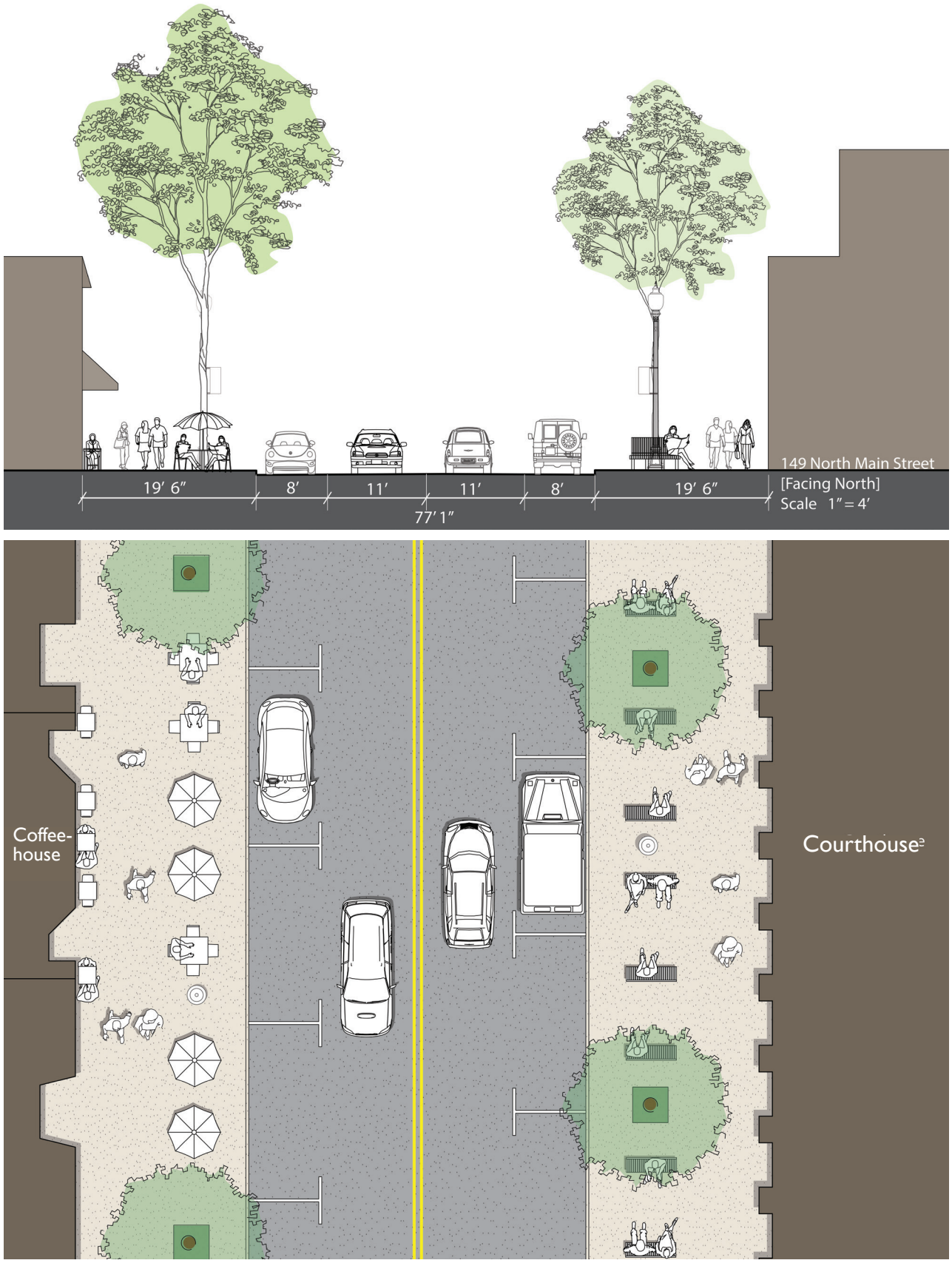
- Encourage new retail and restaurant attraction (return on investment). Replace grease traps, fix any infrastructure issues and limit liability. Increase the ability to compete with newer shopping centers in north Suffolk and downtown Norfolk.
- Desire for more outdoor dining – putting people on the street….combats the perception that nothing is happening in downtown, adds life to the street and expands the tables/profits of restaurants in the good summer months.
- Pedestrian safety improvements needed. All successful downtowns put the pedestrian first and cars second. Currently it can be tough to cross at key intersections. The autombile needs to be tamed and traffic slowed.
- Improve management of paving, landscaping, trees – all are showing age and aggregate can be hard to match with repairs. It's best to use traditional concrete in a 2x2 grid. Easy to repair where street trees are starting to die, new trees need to be strategically worked in now to keep green canopy healthy.

The proposed R-O-W assigns the following percentages to the type of general space:

- 49% of the space to the movement or storage of vehicles – 38' versus the existing 61% (47'1")
- 51% of the space to the movement of people – 39' 1" versus the existing 39% (30')

This new space assignment is achieved by reducing the car travel lanes to 11' and parking lanes to 8' – both national standards for pedestrian areas like Main Street. The remaining R-O-W is given back to the sidewalks creating matching sidewalks at 19' 6" wide. These wider sidewalks are much more conducive to outdoor dining, providing ample space for seating areas (12' 6"), curbside door swings/fixtures/lighting (2') and the required (5') clear sidewalk necessary to fulfill Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements.

▼ FIGURE 3.24 NORTH MAIN STREET [PROPOSED CONDITIONS, SECTION & PLAN VIEWS]



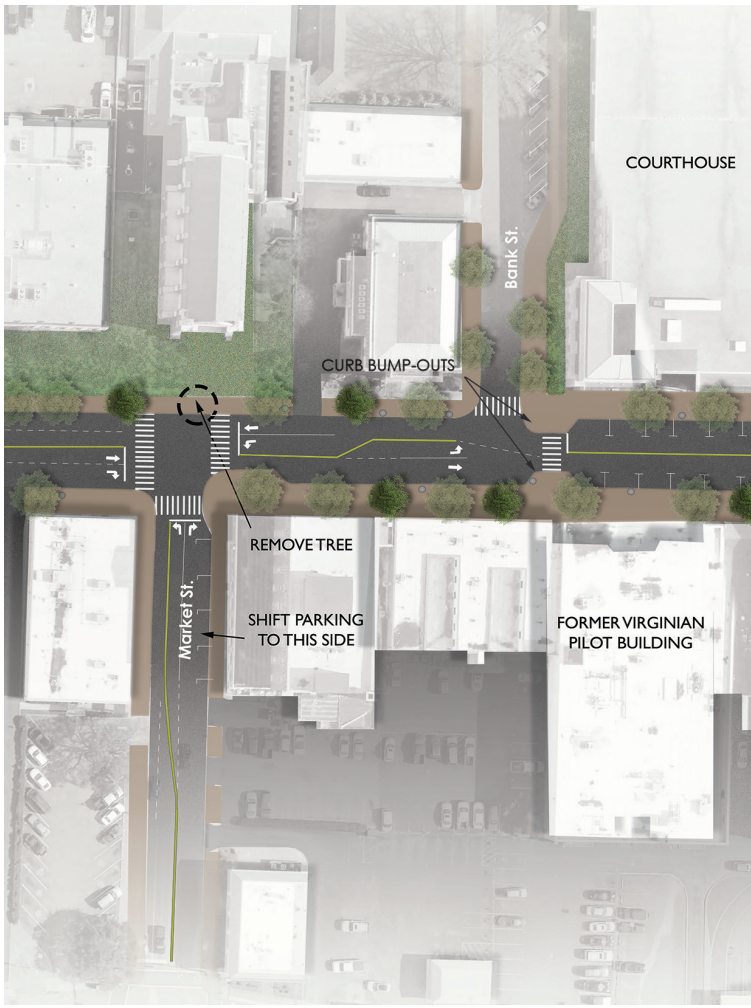
CAFÉ LAYOUT OPTIMIZATION

The Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority requires all sidewalk dining that serves alcohol to be enclosed/separated from the pedestrian movement zones by a barrier or fence. The fence/barrier is meant to make clear to inspectors where alcohol is allowed and to prevent the possession of alcohol outside of the area controlled by the holder of the alcohol permit.

Many states including North Carolina (NC) have changed the way they handle this separation. In NC the area where alcohol is allowed can be demarcated by medallions glued to the sidewalk – removing the requirement for fences/barriers and allowing more space to be allocated to pedestrian movement. In addition, it allows for curbside dining that permits pedestrians to walk "through" the café. Removing the barriers unclutters the sidewalk, maximizes the potential to add more tables for the restaurateur and does not negatively impact enforcement for the inspectors. It may be worth exploring a coordinated lobby effort – conducted by the Virginia Downtown Development Association or similar – to see if the law/requirement can be changed to reflect the changing market for outdoor dining.

▼ FIGURE 3.25 OUTDOOR DINING IN VIRGINIA

Outdoor dining in Virginia requires a barricade if alcohol is served.



THE STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The new streetscape on North Main Street would run from the intersection with Market Street all the way to the overpass on Carolina Road - a length of about 1250 feet. In addition to the new sidewalk streetscape, each intersection would have new bump outs to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance to an average of 16 feet, making crossing distances shorter, adding space for plantings/seating and improving safety.

New trees would be planted in areas where the current trees are reaching the end of their useful life. New concrete paving will eliminate all of the potential trip hazards, improve ADA access and unify sidewalk materials from the various types that are in place today. New LED street lighting will brighten up the street and improve the perception of safety.

Taken together, a new streetscape - designed to support business, improve pedestrian safety/comfort, increase ADA access and fix any underground infrastructure issues – sends a strong signal to the market that Main Street is open for business, worthy of renewed community investment and a good place to invest.

▼ FIGURE 3.26 STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT CONCEPT PLAN

MAIN AND WASHINGTON INTERSECTION

The intersection of North Main Street and Washington Street looks and feels unsafe. As the most important intersection of downtown, the 100% corner, it needs special attention.

- It has the highest density and tallest development in all of downtown.
- It has the highest total volume of vehicular traffic – about 30,000 vehicles a day.
- It had 3 documented pedestrian accidents and 41 vehicular accidents in the last 7 years.
- It functions as the visual gateway to downtown from the south along Carolina Road.

▼ FIGURE 3.27 STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Over time, the sidewalks were narrowed when turn lanes were added. Today, large tractor trailer trucks jump the curbs when turning onto Main Street and Washington Street. In addition, the pedestrian crossing distance is the longest in all of downtown at this intersection.

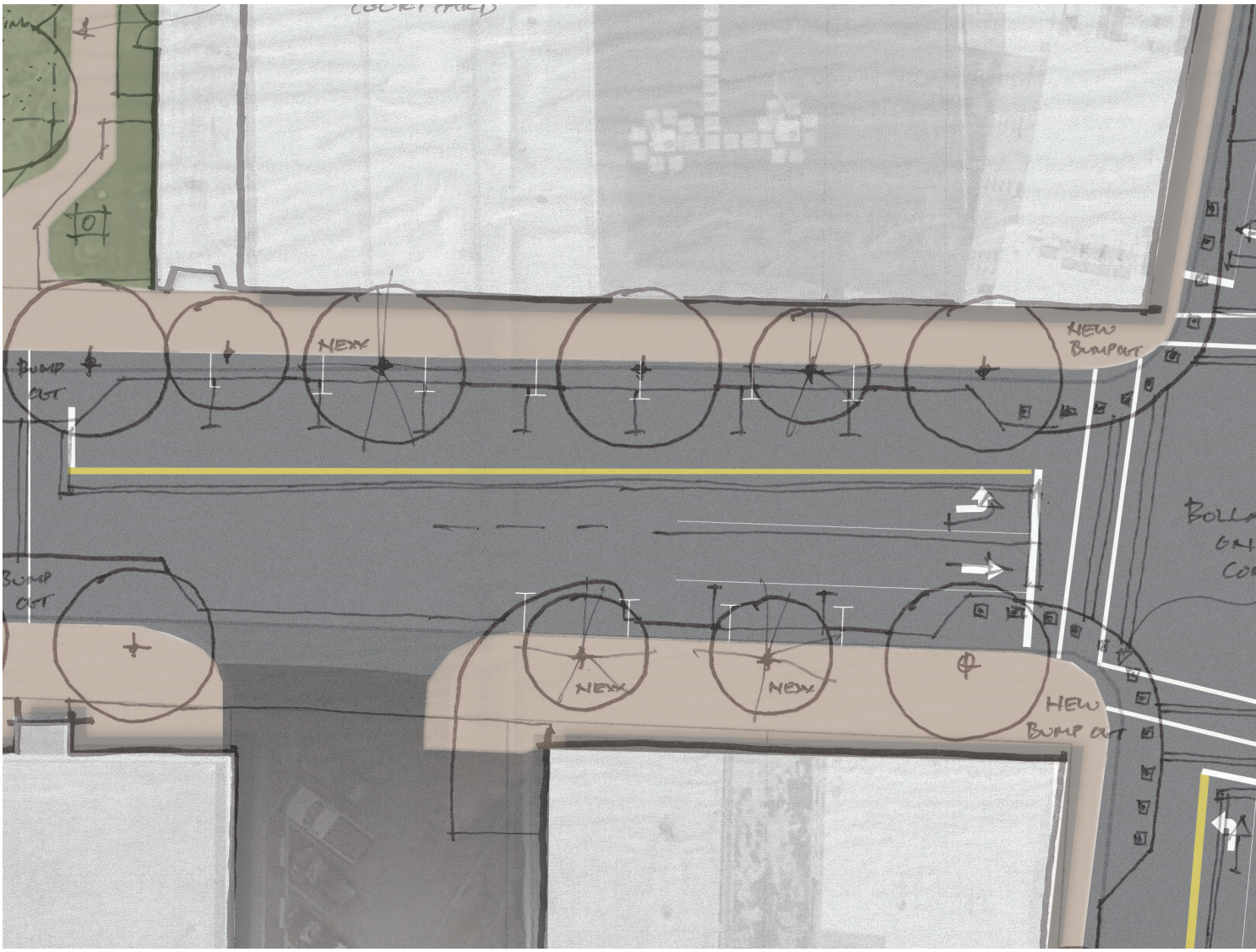
The new streetscape proposes a series of fixes to address these concerns.

1. New bump-outs significantly reduce the pedestrian crossing distance.
2. Bollards located along the edge of the bump outs more clearly define the pedestrian and vehicular space, preventing trucks from jumping the curb into the pedestrian space.

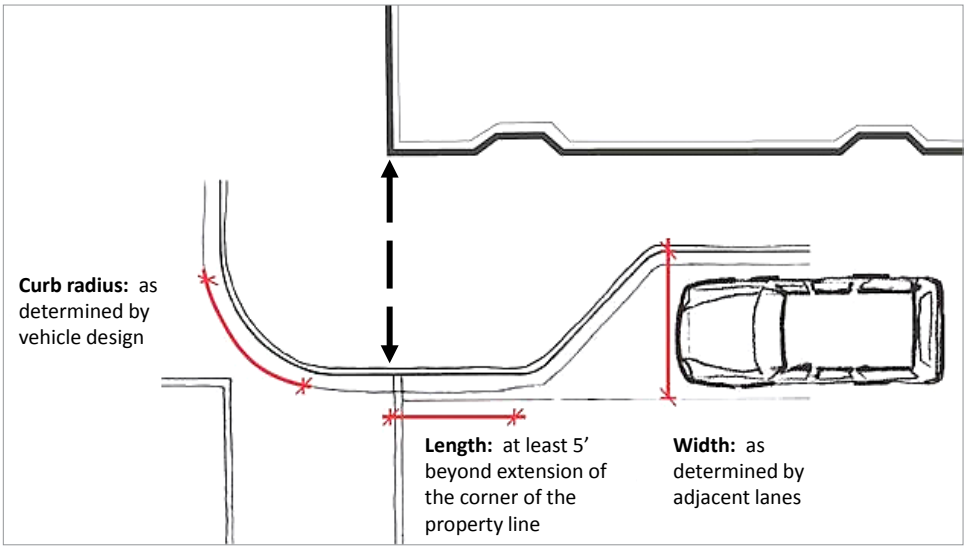
3. A new easement on Washington Street in front of the BB&T Bank to allow a shift of some sidewalk space across the street. The plan takes about 3 feet of sidewalk width from the BB&T side and adds it to the other side of Washington Street equalizing the sidewalk widths and making the north side of Washington Street safer.
4. On Carolina Road, the lane width is narrowed along with the median space (about 5 feet total) and then added to the BB&T sidewalk side to create a wider sidewalk/plaza to match Character Corner. This additional space will allow trees to be planted as well.
5. In addition, the plan proposes removing one of the curb cuts on the BB&T lot. The northern curb cut is closed and added to the sidewalk/plaza. The southern curb cut stays open and is realigned to minimize exiting vehicle conflict with pedestrians.

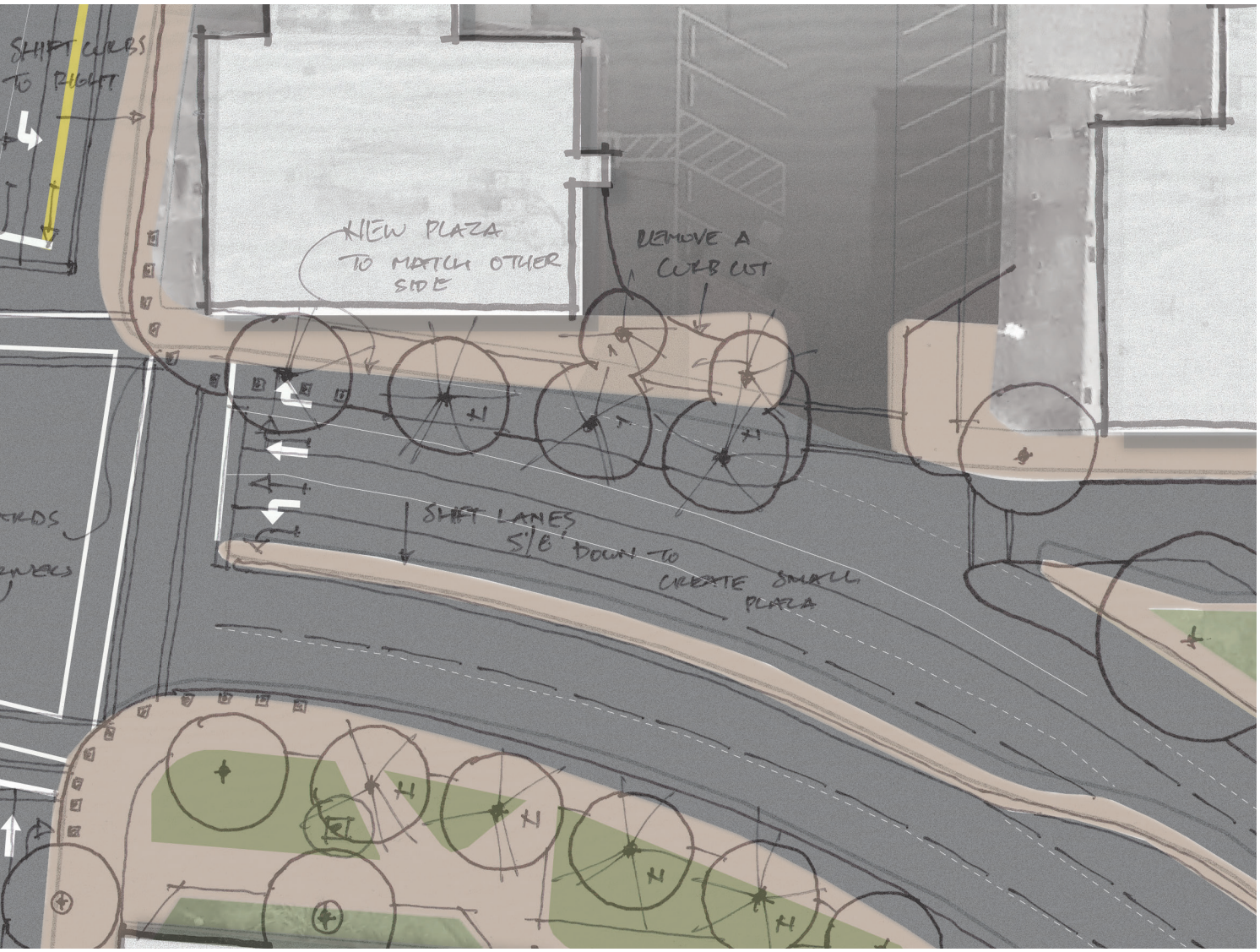
All of these improvements work together to create a safer, better proportioned and more welcoming gateway onto Main Street from the south along Carolina Road.

▼ FIGURE 3.28 STREETSCAPE PROPOSED ILLUSTRATION



▼ FIGURE 3.29 ILLUSTRATIVE DIAGRAM OF CURB BUMP-OUTS / EXTENSIONS





IMPROVE PARKING MANAGEMENT

Every downtown has a parking perception problem. Suffolk is no different. The 2007 Parking Study and our focused update to this study demonstrates that Suffolk has adequate parking to serve the needs of downtown today. There are a total of 1,385 public spaces in downtown parking lots with 585 on-street public spaces. The maximum measured occupancy of on-street spaces reaches a peak of 82% along Main Street from 11am to 1pm. The maximum off street occupancy reaches a peak of 88% in the courthouse parking lot during the same peak hour. In most lots and spaces further away (one block) from Main Street, occupancy drops off to around 40-45%. Downtown does not have a parking problem.

▲ FIGURE 3.30 ON-STREET PARKING (N. SARATOGA ST)

▼ FIGURE 3.31 PHOTO IMAGE EXAMPLE OF ON-STREET PARKING

There are a number of ways to help improve the perception of parking in downtown.

1. Create a clear, coordinated off-street signage system that makes it readily apparent to visitors, residents and downtown workers where they should park. This signage needs to convey if it is or is not open to the public, hours of availability, and fees if applicable. The signage should be the same, no matter who owns/operates the parking lot.
2. Create a clear, easy to enforce, time limited, on-street parking system that is managed for the convenience of downtown patrons and shoppers – not downtown employees. Mark all spaces/ loading zones clearly and educate employees and business owners about the system, the value of on-street spaces and the availability of safe/convenient employee parking.
3. Find, secure and designate a few employee parking lots that are convenient to job destinations, that are well lit/safe and discourage employees from parking in on-street spaces and doing the 2-hour shuffle (moving to avoid a ticket). Provide employees with stickers or mirror tags that allow access to the free parking.
4. Improve the perception of safety – by conducting a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) evaluation that often adds lighting, limits potential hiding areas, limbs up shrubs/trees and increases night-time parking patrols.

PARKING STUDY STATISTIC HIGHLIGHTS

3,292 PARKING SPACES

2,707 OFF-STREET PARKING SPACES

PARKING SPACES OWNERSHIP

MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY

PEAK HOURS 11AM - 1PM

88% COURTHOUSE LOT

82% ON-STREET W. WASHINGTON ST.

▼ FIGURE 3.32 PHOTO COLLAGE OF THE VARIETY OF PARKING SIGNS LOCATED IN DOWNTOWN

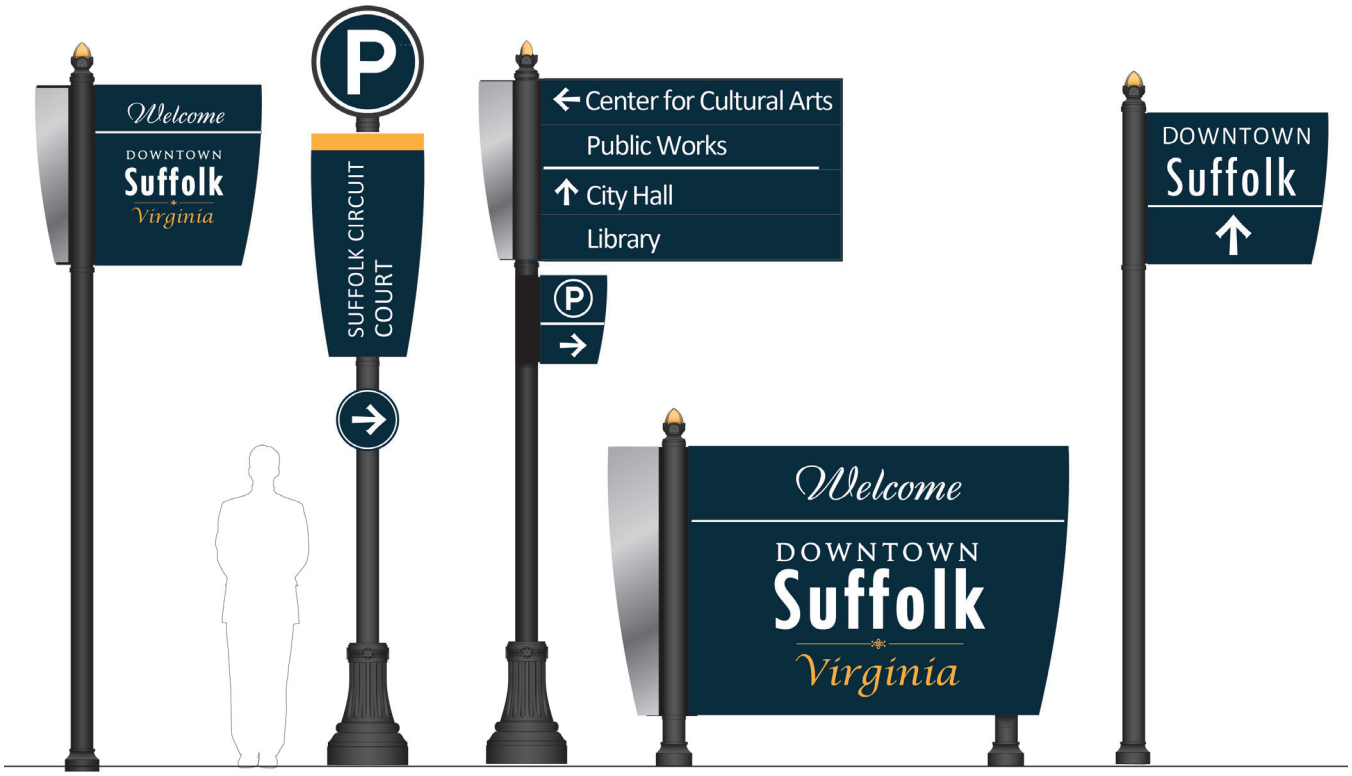
DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING SYSTEM

Downtown wayfinding is a signage system that makes it easier for visitors and pedestrians to find, park and use downtown's shopping, dining, entertainment and parking. Wayfinding can help to brand downtown and highlight important destinations and districts.

While other initiatives are underway, undertake the design of a new Wayfinding System for downtown. This initiative is linked to parking, gateway and Main Street streetscape initiatives and should not be undertaken without coordinating with these three other efforts. They should all be the same design – but can be implemented as each project comes on-line.

In the interim, the City can create a "Walk [Your City]" temporary system (www.walkyourcity.org). This low cost, tactical system allows the City to change the perception of walking distances in downtown and to highlight those destinations that draw or deliver the most pedestrians. It's a quick, cheap and easy first step to getting the community to think about wayfinding and walking.

▼ FIGURE 3.33 EXAMPLE WAYFINDING SIGNAGE SYSTEM

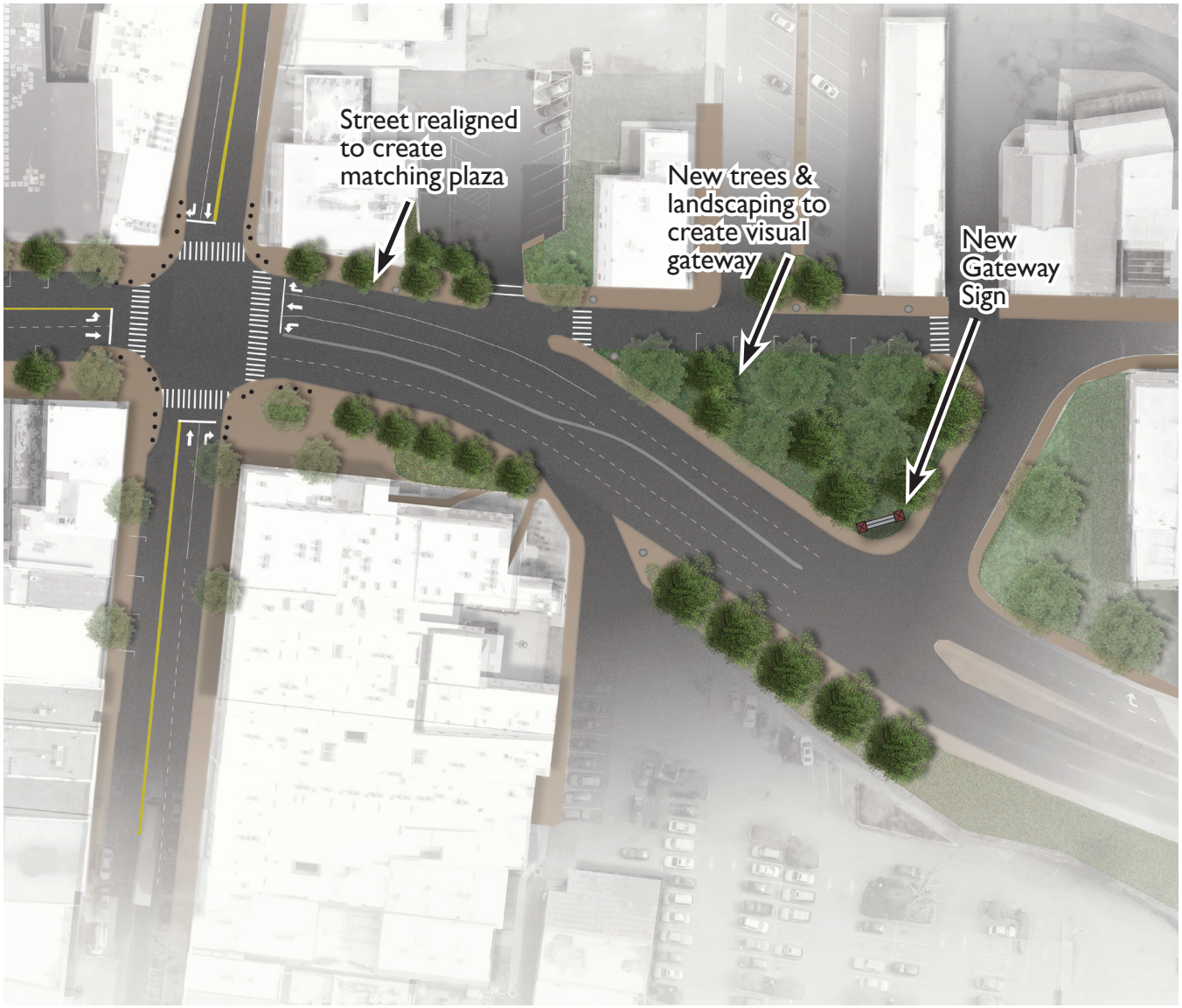


IMPROVE DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

There is currently a limited sense of arrival in downtown. In coordination with the wayfinding design, a series of new downtown gateways needs to demarcate the edge of the district, welcome visitors, and communicate the brand of the City.

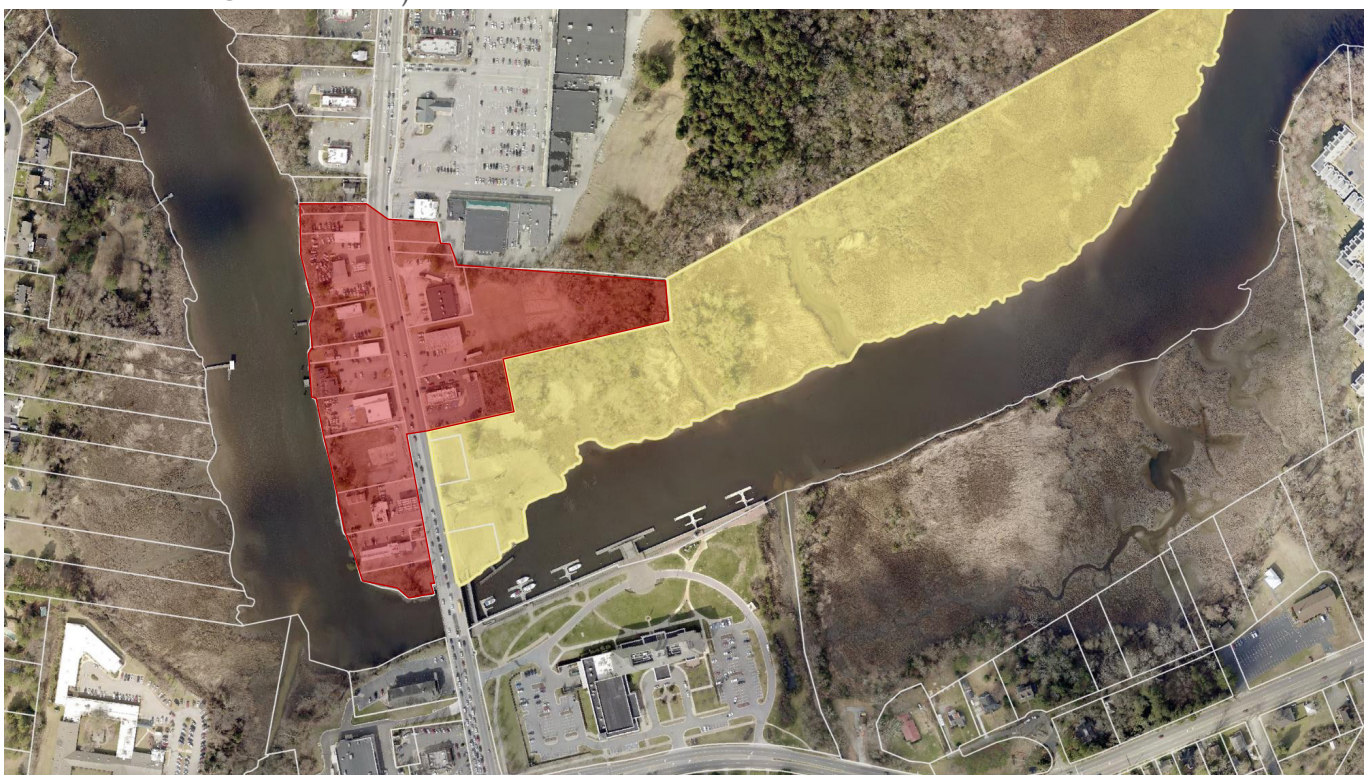
The first gateway could be undertaken as part of the Main Street Streetscape project. It would be located on the right, directly beyond the overpass on Carolina Road. A second location may be on the newly acquired lands across the Kimberly Bridge from Constant's Wharf along the Nansemond Riverfront. Other gateways into downtown will need to be identified as part of a comprehensive wayfinding system and design.

▼ FIGURE 3.34 CAROLINA ROAD GATEWAY DEMARCATIONS



▼ FIGURE 3.35 COLLAGE OF EXISTING GATEWAY SIGNAGE

▼ FIGURE 3.36 NANSEMOND RIVER GATEWAY (RED IDENTIFIES AREAS OF POTENTIAL, YELLOW FOR CITY OWNED LAND)



CONDUCT A SAFETY / CPTED EVALUATION

Throughout the public meetings in support of this plan, there have been consistent comments to improve the perception of safety in downtown. As noted in the prior research and analysis section, Section 2, there has not been an increase in crimes, accidents or other driving issues, as perceived by the general public. No specific issues were identified as part of the public process – just a lingering perception that downtown is not safe. Crime rates for part one and two crimes in the district have remained flat, while vehicular and pedestrian accidents have been very limited and not concentrated at any one intersection or for any one group of people. The occasional major crime does occur and gets, perhaps, an unfair amount of publicity but the data shows that downtown is safe.

▼ FIGURE 3.37 CPTED EXAMPLE OF DESIGN CONCEPTS

So what factors are contributing to this perception and how can they be changed for the better?

1. Downtown is sparsely populated at night. Most of the people are inside – dining, drinking and living. A strategy to get them outside on the street is needed. Nothing quells concerns of safety like a lot of people on the street. Outdoor cafés, busy events, public art, live music spilling into the street all change perceptions of safety.
2. Downtown is dark at night. Lighting in downtown can be improved. Especially on streets entering downtown, in parking lots behind buildings and in public spaces frequented by pedestrians. An accurate audit of street lights, bulb conditions, lighting levels and types should be undertaken and any gaps illuminated.

3. Downtown spaces can have low visibility. Nooks, crannies, walls, trees and shrubs can all block views and provide hiding places. Eliminating blocked views, lighting dark areas, lowering shrubs and limbing up trees can all help to increase the perception of safety.
4. Police presence. People feel safer when they see police officers on the street. Increasing the foot and bike patrols throughout downtown – especially at night and during times when people are out on the street after shows or events can go a long way in improving this perception too.

To organize and prioritize these tactics to improve safety, the City should conduct a *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED) evaluation of downtown that looks at all of the issues that affect the perception of safety. A CPTED Budget and Implementation Plan should be adopted and pursued with vigor. If downtown is not perceived as safe, none of the other initiatives in this plan will deliver their fullest impacts. Safety has to come first.

PREPARE A RETAIL RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Downtown currently has approximately 75,000 square feet of vacant ground floor space representing about a 20% vacancy rate as previous noted in Section 2. There are three basic ways to increase retail/restaurant demand in downtown – increase downtown residents, increase downtown employees, and increase visitation by tourists and non-downtown residents. This plan does not propose any significant new retail space. Rather its main goal is using a variety of strategies to increase demand for vacant space in downtown.

1. Increase housing units on opportunity sites – "retail follows rooftops" is the old market stand by and it's true. This plan proposes two sites for potential residential redevelopment. Both sites together could add about 200 units in downtown. Downtown residents typically seek to fulfill most of their retail/restaurant needs within walking distance. Improving the perception of safety and making it easier to rehabilitate historic housing in nearby neighborhoods can also attract young couples and empty-nesters who want a downtown lifestyle but are not ready for apartment living. Suffolk has an affordable and available historic housing stock adjacent to downtown helping make urban homesteading a feasible opportunity.
2. Increase downtown employees – the Library Square small business scenario seeks to create new downtown businesses that are "sticky," the type of businesses that create new jobs but cannot be lured to another location easily. The proposed live/work units seek to attract existing small business owners to move both their residence and business to downtown. New amenities like the Entertainment and Market Venue, Library and increased outdoor dining are all meant to be attractive to potential downtown employers who are increasingly having to compete for new employees.
3. Increase downtown visitation – the new Library, Suffolk Museum, a Small Business Center and shared maker/kitchen spaces in the Library Square scenarios are (in addition to their stated

purpose) all designed to increase visitation in downtown – these places are destinations that no other area of the city has to offer. The Entertainment and Market Venue is potentially the biggest driver of new downtown visitation. If well programmed and successful, it alone could deliver over 200,000 visitors into the heart of the City to see a concert/movie, attend a holiday event, shop at the farmers' market or go to a festival.

Great downtown destinations do not happen by chance. If all of these initiatives come to fruition, a retail strategy will be needed to maximize the return on these investments. Developing a strategy should not be the first initiative, rather, significant progress on these demand generators should be made first. As these initiatives are becoming realized, with plans, budgets and approvals in place – that is the time to embark on a new retail strategy. The strategy will identify the supply of retail/restaurant spaces, project new and/or leaking demand, identify new market positions/niches, propose the right mix of new uses, create a common downtown marketing message and devise a strategy to target and recruit new establishments.

In addition to a recruitment strategy, the City needs to explore offering assistance with incentives like expedited permits/approvals, facade grants, tax abatements (like an arts district enables), help installing grease traps and other efforts that make it easy to open a business in downtown. Once new momentum is proven, the monetary incentives can be reevaluated.

For existing retailers and restaurateurs, the impacts of any streetscape construction on Main Street will need to be minimized. Expert assistance should be offered to retail merchandisers and restaurant operators to help under-performing establishments react and capture their share of the new demand. Preparing and implementing a new parking management system that makes it easy and clear for customers/employees to know where and when to park should go a long way in attracting new customers and retaining regular customers. In addition, this would address one of the main complaints received from retailers and restaurateurs.

▼ FIGURE 3.38 RETAIL RECRUITMENT PROCESS

EXPLORE CREATION OF AN ARTIST / CREATIVE DISTRICT

The State of Virginia has a unique Arts/Cultural District Designation that supports the creation and expansion of creative economies in downtowns by offering a range of incentives to targeted arts, cultural and creative enterprises.

- An Arts and Creative District can be used to develop new incentives targeted to attracting arts, cultural and creative employers, retailers, restaurants and venues.
- Coupled with a market based retail strategy, the district could offer powerful implementation tools to achieve the strategy's goals.
- Typically involves tax abatements, reduced fees and expedited permitting for targeted qualifying venues, retailers and businesses.

As a local example, Norfolk has created a Downtown Arts and Cultural District that works to incentivize the formation and retention of arts, cultural and creative enterprises within its boundaries. It does this by defining qualifying businesses as:

Arts Business and Organizations - a business or organization that positively contributes to the spectrum and vibrancy of arts and cultural activities and venues available to the public, including:

1. Theaters
2. Art Galleries
3. Museums
4. Public Art

Creative Economy Business - a business whose primary economic activities are the generation or utilization of innovation, knowledge and information involving individual creativity, skill and talent, including:

1. Advertising
2. Architecture
3. Art and Antiques
4. Computer Software Design
5. Culinary Arts
6. Music Venues
7. Dance Studios
8. Historic Sites
9. Other imaginative works and exhibitions
10. Crafts
11. Design
12. Fashion
13. Film, Video and Music Production
14. Performing Arts

The districts encourage and entice those businesses through the provision of these potential incentives:

1. Site plan and other application fees waived
2. Permit fees waived
3. Business, professional and occupational license fee relief with no minimum investment
4. Business personal property tax relief for new businesses
    - For example,100% the first two years and 50% for the third year
5. Marketing and branding support for the district
6. Refine development guidelines and requirements such as sign regulations
7. Expand and improve facade grant programs (as necessary)

This type of designation enables the provision of a whole suite of incentives for current and new businesses and coupled with a thorough retail study can go a long way to solving the supply side of the recruitment strategy – the opening of new businesses.

Many of the other downtown initiatives highlighted in this plan and in the retail recruitment strategy section are designed to increase the demand side of the equation. Together they offer a compelling toolkit for the revitalization of downtown Suffolk.

WASHINGTON STREET INTERVENTIONS / PLACEMAKING

While North Main Street received much of the focus for short-term recommendations, there are a variety of small tactical moves that can be implemented to help create a greater sense of place along Washington Street and in other locations downtown. The images depicted to the right illustrate facade makeovers and other enhancements/activities that can help stimulate interest and create vibrancy in downtown. Many of these activities and efforts are low cost and can be implemented in many different ways.

Some of the ideas discussed during the Design Downtown Workshops included:

- Pop-up farmers' market or make-shift small event space
- Facade improvements
- Seasonal displays where space is available
- Allowing greater freedom to create murals that are not specifically historic
- Pop-up cafés and activity stations (pianos in the street, large checker boards, patio dining, etc)
- Addition of landscaping in areas to encourage outdoor dining and seating
- Pop-up plazas (reclaiming parking areas as a parklet with potted trees and movable furniture)
- Enhance crosswalk areas to encourage increased pedestrian activity

▼ FIGURE 3.39 PLACEMAKING STRATEGIES

WEST WASHINGTON STREET [PLACEMAKING]

1 LANDSCAPING & SCREENING
- Add willow oaks (or other large maturing tree) in between Crepe Myrtles for the length of West Washington to Main Street.
- Add landscaping and/or fencing to screen parking lots for those lots facing Washington Street.

2 CROSSWALKS & SIDEWALKS
3
4
- Add pedestrian crosswalk. Generally where unsignalized, consider "Hawk Signal" or other pedestrian signaling system. At a minimum, post freestanding crossing signs in center. Paint ladder design or consider unique designs.

5 PUBLIC ART [MURAL]
- Add mural art on exterior building wall. Consider an existing non-profit organization becoming sponsor rather than the City.

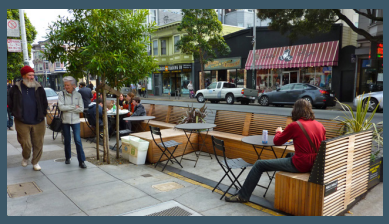
6 POP-UP MARKET
- Create pop-up farmers' market, antique market, and/or temporary event space.

7 ACTIVATE & ENLIVEN SPACE

- Add potted plants, heaters in fall/spring and canopy lights to enliven space. Replace wooden fence with more open, inviting design.

8 ACTIVATE & ENLIVEN SPACE

- Invite furniture store to display their products in the front setback area. Alternative is to make this a public seating area which the furniture store sponsors.



9 STREET RECONFIGURATION

- Remove left turn lane, combine with straight movement. Add median at intersection with pedestrian refuge and crosswalk markings. Add new crosswalk across West Washington.

EAST WASHINGTON STREET [PLACEMAKING]

1 3 6 13 18 LANDSCAPING & SCREENING

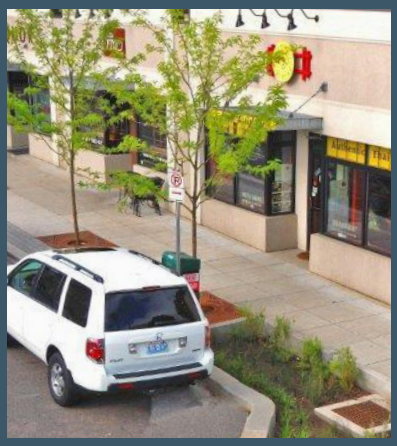
- Add willow oaks (or other large maturing tree) interspersed with ornamental trees along East Washington Street.
- Add landscaping and/or fencing to screen parking lots for those lots facing East Washington Street.

2 4 12 POP-UP MARKET

- Create pop-up markets or plazas in old parking areas and until infill occurs. Include movable furniture, improved lighting, etc., Themes could include public art, kid oriented, quiet oasis, music, food trucks, flower market, etc .

5 14 WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

- Add wayfinding & parking signage where appropriate indicating rear parking areas.



7 9 15 19 PUBLIC ART [MURALS]

- Add public art such as murals to celebrate heritage and culture of place. Examples - add mural to Seed Company building, art work incorporated into crosswalks.

8 10 11 17 CROSSWALKS & SIDEWALKS

- Add pedestrian crosswalk. Generally where unsignalized, consider "Hawk Signal" or other pedestrian signaling system. At a minimum, post freestanding crossing signs in center. Paint ladder design or consider unique designs. Include enhanced sidewalk connectivity traversing railroad and East Washington intersection.

16 PARKING

- Seek Public-Private Partnerships where appropriate - example here of church parking lot could be leased and allow public parking. Make improvements in consideration of shared use and long term lease.

UNDERTAKE SIGNIFICANT REGULATORY IMPROVEMENTS

During the public meetings, many business and property owners expressed concerns about the current permitting process for a variety of uses and activities within downtown. In order to better understand some of these issues and concerns, the City should prepare a *Downtown Development and Permitting Improvement Study*. The *Study*'s goal should be to make it easier to locate in downtown than anywhere else in the City. It should be as efficient as possible to open and operate a business, develop vacant land and rehabilitate properties in downtown Suffolk. In downtown, uses such as restaurants, breweries, and entertainment (live music) should be permitted easily, otherwise these uses may decide to locate elsewhere; either somewhere else in Suffolk or other downtowns in the region.

As part of the process, the City should conduct work sessions with property owners, business owners, restaurants, Historic Landmarks Commission, developers, neighborhood leaders, city staff and others. The process should be led by the downtown management entity recommended as part of this plan.

Some of the key issues identified during the master plan process included:

1. One stop shop for downtown development projects
2. Streamline process / quick turnaround permits for cafés and signs
3. Historic District flexibility for:
    - Non-permanent changes vs. permanent changes
    - New construction vs rehabilitation
4. Make it easier to do outdoor cafés, sandwich/special boards, busking
5. Examine the process and fees for live music within a bar/restaurant

IMPROVE DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT

WHY CREATE A DOWNTOWN OFFICE?

Downtown Suffolk's competition, which includes local shopping centers, the internet and other nearby downtowns, is being professionally managed and evaluated on a regular basis by an individual or group that is responsible and accountable for their success. The City has several staff members that help support downtown initiatives; however, it does not have one individual or organization that focuses on the success of downtown on a full-time basis.

On the heels of this plan's adoption and in light of recent investments in downtown, there will be a new momentum, a potential political focus and a definite need for an entity to take responsibility for coordinating the partnerships required for the plan's implementation. If no one is accountable, then no one is directly responsible and the plan will sit on the shelf – gathering dust.

Many models exist for organizing and running a downtown management entity. Some downtown management entities are held within the city, some are outside non-profits, while some are a combination of the two depending on the funding strategies a community desires to pursue. Leadership is critical. The most successful downtowns have a management entity that has the full support of the mayor and city council, city manager and the various departments that have some responsibility in downtown.

Many cities form a "Downtown Action Group" (DAG) - composed of the downtown manager, the city manager and every department that supports downtown development. The DAG determines the implementation priorities, coordinates work plans, oversees budget requests, evaluates/changes regulations and manages all projects/events in downtown. All emerging issues are addressed, assigned and resolved at its monthly meetings. The goal of the DAG is to get the plan implemented, for projects to be coordinated across the entire city organization and for problems to be solved quickly and efficiently. The DAG gets things done.

POTENTIAL DOWNTOWN ENTITY WORK PLAN

No matter what model is followed, the work of the downtown management entity will involve many of the following tasks:

1. Implement the 2018 Downtown Master Plan
2. Manage the parking system and parking signage process
3. Manage the new streetscape design process
4. Manage the downtown event venue design process
5. In partnership with the Economic Development Department
    - Manage the downtown retail strategy and recruitment
    - Market the long term opportunity sites in and around downtown
6. In partnership with the Police/Public Safety Department
    - Coordinate and implement the CPTED evaluation
    - Coordinate an increased police presence in downtown
7. In partnership with the Planning Department
    - Instigate and coordinate a regulatory reform process that changes city rules in pursuit of making it easier to invest in existing buildings, develop vacant land, hold an event or own/operate a business in downtown.
    - Manage the process, sale and redevelopment of the two identified opportunity sites
    - Implement parks and greenway improvements in and adjacent to downtown.
8. In partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department and the Tourism Division
    - Coordinate the expansion and approval of new events in downtown. Move the Farmers' Market into its new shed, create Art Walks, First Friday music events and bring all the normal Holiday festivities - 4th of July, Christmas, Homecoming, Halloween etc. back into downtown.

EXPLORE A DEDICATED FUNDING STRATEGY FOR THE DOWNTOWN OFFICE

Every downtown entity is by definition a Public/Private Partnership. It works to bridge the gap between public and private concerns, bringing needed attention to both. Its funding should reflect its unique role in the City – deriving part of its budget from the very properties its serves through a special tax levy and allocation, another part of its budget directly from the city government and other funds for events/ special projects directly from sponsorships and private fundraising. A new downtown organization will need all three sources of funding in order to accomplish its mission.

Below we have identified some funding streams that already exist within the city, others that the entity would have to develop/undertake and still others to potentially harness based on its enabling legislation requirements. This list is not exhaustive but should be thought of as a first step to get a sense of what monies may be available to start the effort.

1. General Revenue Funding – to fund office space, furniture, technology and downtown projects
2. Special Tax District Funds – to fund salaries, benefits and operations
3. Hotel Occupancy Tax – to fund events/activities that draw tourists
4. Naming Rights, Sponsorships, Fundraising – to fund special projects, marketing and events

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CITY of SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA

4

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

OVERVIEW

Often times communities will ease into implementing a new plan, giving it time to percolate through the political process and receive final approvals and input from their governing bodies prior to taking action. This was not the case in the City of Suffolk. As issues were discovered during the plan development process that needed immediate attention or could be completed in an efficient and effective manner, the City immediately took action. Some of the early implementation actions included:

- New street trees planted in vacant wells on Main Street and Washington Street
- Limbed up all trees in North Main Street pocket park/plaza next to the Courthouse
- Set out temporary pop-up cafés during the Design Downtown Workshops - people loved it
- Approved the first Outdoor Dining Permit for a North Main street property owner
- Presentation of draft plans and concepts to the Rotary Club and City Council

▼ FIGURE 4.1 POP-UP CAFÉ

▼ FIGURE 4.2 LIMBED UP TREES IN POCKET PARK

In order to keep the momentum going, an implementation plan for the next 10 years has been developed. A total of 21 implementation strategies are included in the full implementation plan. While each strategy is important to carry forward, the strategies were grouped by projects to be completed within 1 year of plan adoption, 2 to 5 years, and 5 to 10 years. The implementation plan is described on the pages that follow.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In every city, the city council and management team have priorities, capacities and resources to carry out their daily responsibilities working to maintain services and improve their communities. While the Suffolk Downtown Master Plan was based on a firm foundation of research and public input, markets change, councils change, the economy fluctuates and new opportunities arise over time that may impact implementation of the Master Plan. The implementation plan that follows is a high level set of actions for the City to follow over the next 5 to 10 years for Downtown Suffolk to become the thriving centerpiece of the City.

The implementation plan will require additional stakeholder meetings, staff consultation and leadership discussions to further clarify community priorities, what Suffolk has the capacity to manage, what private entities can take a partnership role in implementation and what scale of resources Suffolk wants to expend in downtown. All of these questions are critical to the plan's implementation.

This plan has not explored the full range of partnerships that can be leveraged, created and/or expanded in support of downtown. However, Suffolk needs a full time downtown organization to cement those partnerships, be responsible for the plan's implementation and to manage downtown for the benefit of the entire community. Without such an organization, the plan will have difficulty achieving its potential.

The implementation plan suggests and lists internal city departments that seem best positioned to take the lead or develop the partnerships for each initiative in advance of the creation of a downtown organization.

YEAR 1

GET THE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE IN PLACE AND KEEP MOMENTUM MOVING

CREATE THE DOWNTOWN MANAGEMENT ENTITIES

City Manager's Office and Downtown Special District Tax Payers

- As an early priority, work closely with key City staff and City Council to determine the most effective downtown organization model for Suffolk; for example, a quasi-public steering committee could be created. Once the most appropriate model is selected, move forward with the necessary actions to establish the organization.
- Determine the initial funding sources/budget for the organization.
- After adoption of the Master Plan, create an internal Downtown Action Group that oversees the first steps of implementation, assisting with the creation of the downtown entity. The DAG should begin taking action and creating departmental work plans in support of the Master

Plan implementation.

- Begin a search to secure a downtown space for the downtown organization and develop the initial plans and budget for the upfit of that space.
- Begin the process to hire a full time downtown director and staff based on the selected organizational model.

IMPLEMENT A COORDINATED OFF-STREET PARKING MANAGEMENT AND SIGNAGE PLAN

Public Works and Private Lot Owners

- In the pursuit of making it easy/pleasant to park in downtown, begin implementing a strategy to coordinate the management and signage of all off-street parking resources in downtown.
- Conduct a thorough inventory, condition assessment, safety assessment and map all public and private parking resources in the system.
- Prepare a budget for all signage on city property and directional signage in the public rights of way.

WALK [YOUR CITY] – A FIRST STEP WAYFINDING STRATEGY

Planning/Parks and Recreation/Tourism Departments

- With the new destinations planned and the reconstruction of Main Street's Streetscape proposed, now is not the best time to plan a downtown wide wayfinding strategy. It's best to wait until those projects are completed.
- As a short term effort to keep momentum going, at a low cost, the City should consider creating and installing a short term "Walk [Your City]" system (www.walkyourcity.org).
- This system is easy to install, low cost and usually garners great press.
- The system identifies the major destinations in downtown and tells downtown visitors and residents the direction and time it takes to walk there. It encourages walking and can help to educate visitors/residents that downtown is compact, walkable and easy to navigate.

CONDUCT THE CPTED ANALYSIS – MAKE CHANGES THAT IMPROVE PERCEPTION OF SAFETY

Police/Planning Departments

- Downtown has to be perceived as safe. It's a critical first step – without it, all other strategies will not reach their fullest potential.
- As a first step, explore increasing the visibility of the police in downtown.
- Create a more formalized downtown boundary to begin tracking and measuring downtown crime consistently.
- Make a detailed map/database of all crimes in downtown over the last 5-10 years. Look for patterns that can be affected by design. Collect the data to more effectively determine the impact of new policies and safety improvements.

- Prepare an accurate map of all street and private lighting downtown. Look for areas that are poorly lighted, fix any damaged or low performing lights, add more street lights where needed and create a small grant program to install lighting on private lots that are not well lighted. Focus on parking areas and pathways to the adjacent neighborhoods. Ensure the new lights are shielded and focused downward, adhering to dark sky lighting standards and directing light downward.
- After mapping and assembling all the data. Conduct a detailed CPTED analysis of downtown. Make a priority list of all CPTED recommendations and a budget to fund the implementation.

CONDUCT A THOROUGH DOWNTOWN REGULATORY REFORM PROCESS

Planning and Community Development

- First and most important – make it easy to set up an outdoor café and adopt new outdoor café rules as soon as possible, so cafes will be open in summer.
- Create a downtown regulatory reform committee made up of a variety of business owners, building owners, developers, preservation groups, event planners, etc.
- Devise a focused process to uncover the most impactful regulation changes that can easily be implemented in the first year. As a priority, identify those regulations that have a high private cost and low public benefit and are confusing or not easily enforceable.
- Make it easy to do the things that will revitalize downtown quickly – open outdoor cafes, small scale signage changes, secure event approvals, get historic district approvals for smaller scale projects, remove any onerous requirements for parking or changes of use, for example.
- Prepare a city initiated reform package that brings forward a series of recommended regulation adjustments at once. It sends a great signal if the city shepherds the changes through quickly and efficiently – we are open for business!
- Explore partnering with the Virginia Downtown Development Association to seek changes in outdoor café/alcohol rules that removes the "barrier" requirement and allows more efficient layout of sidewalk outdoor cafes.

YEAR 1 *MOVEMENT ON THE MAJOR PROJECTS*

BEGIN THE PROCESS TO REBUILD THE MAIN STREET STREETSCAPE

Planning, Public Utilities, Public Works Departments

- Identify grant funding opportunities or other resources to help with the design process costs.
- Begin to outline and finalize a design process, advisory committee, schedule, and budget.
- Determine the required funding for a design and cost estimating process.

- Develop a CIP strategy that begins banking funds to pay for the project or determines how to pay for the project.
- Conduct (as best as possible – in house) a detailed underground infrastructure assessment to get a sense of what may need to be replaced.
- When the team has outlined, established and approved a funding strategy, a design process and a better sense of costs – prepare an RFP to begin the detailed design process.

BUILD AN EVENT VENUE, FESTIVAL SITE AND MARKET HALL

Economic Development, Planning & Community Development, Courts and Manager's Office

- Devise a first steps strategy that gets some events moved or new events created for the site. Make a rough schedule of what a potential summer season might look like for this year.
- Prepare a budget for a small summer season and seek private sponsors.
- Develop the requirements and locate a temporary stage, tents and the necessary other infrastructure to begin holding events on site.
- Explore state and federal downtown, arts and agricultural based grant funding for the Market Hall, Plaza and Stage.
- Explore what it would take to move a weekly Farmers' Market onto the site.
- Develop a CIP strategy that begins banking funds to pay for the project.

CREATE A PLAN AND STRATEGY FOR LIBRARY SQUARE

Library, Economic Development, Manager's Office

- Determine the political and community support for a new downtown library, its potential cost and what kind of library the community desires. Conduct surveys and focus group meetings to identify community needs and priorities for a new library.
- The goal of this plan is to fully leverage the city's existing investment in the library site, partially tailor the program of the library to attract the type of private investment the market can support.
- If support is positive, confirm the site and its potential to leverage additional private development. The library needs to be a catalyst for the greater downtown that leads to reinvestment on West Washington Street. The Master Plan considered three options, however, others options may arise as the project moves forward.
    1. A Focus on Education – This theme draws on the creation and co-location of a new downtown magnet school as an amenity to draw families to live downtown, a new Suffolk History Museum to tell the community's story to visitors and the relocation of a branch of a local community/technical college to train new employees for jobs in downtown and throughout the community.
    2. A Focus on Small Business – This theme focuses on supporting all the stages of new business

formation by providing a small business center to guide entrepreneurs in start-ups, shared maker/kitchen spaces to provide the required infrastructure for testing ideas, small scale flex space for new businesses to grow into and lastly live/work units for those existing small businesses that want to move into downtown.

3. A Focus on Living - This theme looks at how a library and square can become an amenity for new housing attraction by providing amenities like shared tools, musical instruments and community meeting spaces. The adjacent sites can be developed to target young people who want to live downtown in more affordable micro-units or empty nesters who may want to downsize into townhouses – both who want to take advantage of the new entertainment options at the event venue or the burgeoning new restaurant scene.

- Once a conceptual program for the library is developed and approved (what kind of library do we want), the city should hire a team to explore the market (office, residential, entertainment etc.) in more detail, develop a series of conceptual site plans for the redevelopment of the remaining portions of the site in advance of issuing RFP's for the sale and redevelopment of those sites adjacent to the library.

PRIVATE REDEVELOPMENT OF OPPORTUNITY SITES

Economic Development, Planning, City Manager's Office

- Gather data and documentation for each potential redevelopment site. Zoning, infrastructure assessments, detailed surveys, previous assembly costs, Phase 1-2 environmental assessments and other pertinent information to the redevelopment of each site.
- Develop a strategy to assemble the remaining parcels in the site groups and work with private land owners.
- Remove as many of the unknowns related to each site as possible – clear up deeds, conduct environmental clean-up, complete assembly, city initiated rezonings (if needed), accurate surveys, etc. The sites need to be as attractive as possible to potential private development partners.
- Prepare a strategy for relocating any existing city employees/work groups/equipment from the current affected sites.
- Determine which project/sites to pursue first and focus on getting one project into the private development pipeline in the next two years.
- The downtown market analysis uncovered the highest demand for downtown residential. Getting a substantial residential project underway in downtown can bring a lot of momentum, build demand for restaurants/retail and add life to the streets. Residential redevelopment on City sites or on private sites should be priority for downtown.

YEAR 2-5 *MANAGEMENT PROJECTS*

THE FULL DOWNTOWN WAYFINDING PLAN

Planning, Public Works, Downtown Office

- As the plan moves through implementation, the Main Street Streetscape, Event Venue/Market and Library projects get more defined, the wayfinding necessary to lead visitors to these new investments takes on added importance.
- Prepare a strategy and install a Downtown Wayfinding System that directs both vehicles and pedestrians to the major destinations in downtown.
- Make sure the system is coordinated with the other departments to present a unified image to the public. All city signage should have similar design elements that communicate Suffolk's unique history and vision.
- Wayfinding goes beyond just street signs – parking signage, gateway features, greenways/bikeways/waterways and parks should all have signage that reflects the new design.
- Wayfinding is not just about adding new signs – an important part of the system is identifying those existing signs that become redundant and remove them.

IMPROVE THE GATEWAYS INTO DOWNTOWN

Planning, Public Works, Downtown Office

- In the first year of plan adoption, study the potential locations for new gateways into downtown on all the major corridors of entry.
- Begin the process to secure the identified locations for new gateways as soon as possible. Hold the locations until the wayfinding design is completed.
- Install the new gateways as part of the wayfinding system.

THE NEXT ROUND OF REGULATORY REFORM

Planning & Community Development

- As downtown revitalizes, businesses change and new developers/projects come into the market, they will uncover other regulatory issues that may need to be addressed.
- The downtown office should work with other departments to keep a running list of regulatory issues that need to be addressed.
- Develop a city initiated reform package every year or every other year until most issues have been resolved.

A RETAIL MARKET STUDY AND RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

Downtown, Economic Development and Planning Departments

- As the plan is implemented and activity is increasing, demand for downtown food, goods and services should rise and adapt.
- To capture the increased demand and respond to a changing market, a Retail Market Study and Recruitment Strategy will need to be developed.
- The Strategy will study all of the planned/proposed downtown changes, forecast future demand, document existing retail leakage and define the niches/submarkets where downtown can compete with other retail centers in the city.
- After downtown's retail market and position have been defined, the Strategy will identify what new retail types are missing, needed, and have the best chance of success. It will develop a list of retailers/restaurants to target for recruitment to downtown.
- The plan should also address how to help existing retailers/restaurants expand or reposition themselves to capture and compete in the new downtown.
- Often cities develop special provisions for "legacy" retailers/restaurants that have been a part of the downtown experience for decades and are special parts of the community. Many communities think that these special experiences need to be preserved and enhanced. A local example would be the Peanut Roaster on West Washington Street.
- Part of every early Retail Strategy – especially one in downtowns that are on the front end of revitalization – will require a thorough examination of the need for and type of incentives that can help to achieve the community's goals.
- Assign one office to be the point for all the downtown retail efforts. Potential retailers/restaurants will need one person that guides them through the process.

EXPLORE THE CREATION OF A DOWNTOWN ARTS AND CREATIVE DISTRICT

Downtown, Economic Development and Planning Departments

- There are many special designations in the Virginia Code that allow the provision of incentives and regulatory relief for targeted types of businesses like arts, creative, tourism and others. The City should explore which of these designations best matches the goals of the retail recruitment strategy and use it to achieve the goals of the Strategy.
- An early scan of the options seems to indicate that the Arts and Creative District provisions most closely match the needs of downtowns. However, others may be authorized in the interim and every option should be analyzed, compared and explored.
- Once the Retail Strategy is completed and the arts and creative districts options are identified, the City/Downtown Office should convene a series of workshops with local retailers/restauranteurs/developer/property owners to present the findings, discuss the issues and develop an incentive package that has the best chance of success in developing an expanded retail/restaurant market.

YEAR 2-5 *DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS*

START THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MAIN STREET

Planning, Downtown, Economic Development, Public Utilities and Public Works

- Completing a new Main Street Streetscape is not just about refreshing the appearance of Main Street. It's about economic development, jobs and creating a vibrant heart of the City.
- Before construction even begins, the retail strategy should be in place, any planned incentives authorized, a temporary parking strategy developed, new wayfinding designed and one time additional incentives, like an expanded facade grant program, explored.
- This is the City's chance to reset the operation of downtown, show its commitment to the plan and demonstrate to the community and existing Main Street retailers/restaurants and service providers that downtown is becoming the thriving centerpiece of the City.
- Most cities undertake a Main Street Streetscape project once every 20 years or so. This type of reconstruction can be very disruptive to existing businesses on the street.
- A mitigation plan that addresses the concerns of existing businesses is a very important part of the construction process.
- Every effort should be made to lessen the impacts, assist existing businesses and to plan for the reopening of Main Street.

PERMANENT EVENT VENUE & MARKET HALL

Planning, Downtown, Economic Development, Public Utilities and Public Works

- In year 2 or 3, after a couple of summer seasons of downtown events being held at the new temporary site, prepare an action plan for the creation of permanent facilities in the Courthouse parking lot.
- Create a committee of event planners, promoters, farmers and potential sponsors in the city to develop a program for what is needed in the permanent facility. Sizes, utilities, capacities etc.
    - Plan for attentive and creative management of the facilities
    - Plan for a booking operation – someone will have to go out and find the promoters, programs, concerts or events that will appeal to the Suffolk market.
    - Plan for the management of the Market Hall – not just for farmers but as a holiday market, flea market or even as a retail incubator.
    - Develop an infrastructure plan that addresses all the needs of the facility – gates/ fences to allow ticket sales, power, water, bathrooms, waste removal etc. The idea is to make events easy to produce.

  - Seek out sponsorships, naming rights and other private benefactors that can lower the cost of the project.
- Develop a design scope of work and issue an RFP to seek a well-qualified design and construction team. Build the project.

OPPORTUNITY SITES REDEVELOPMENT

Planning, Economic Development, Managers' Office

- By now, the City should have already assembled each of the short-term opportunity sites, conducted all the research necessary to remove any unknowns related to each site, including testing the sites with developers in the market, rezoning the sites if necessary and have at least one of the sites under active redevelopment.
- If the economy stays strong and the assembly has been completed, choose the next opportunity site to pursue active redevelopment.

YEAR 5-10 *COMBINED PROJECTS*

COMPLETE DOWNTOWN OPPORTUNITY SITE REDEVELOPMENTS

Planning, Economic Development, Managers' Office

- By now the new library should be underway or open, Main Street has a new streetscape and the Event Venue and Market Hall is under construction or open and operating. New demand for housing, retail and office users is being generated by all three projects.
- At least two of the opportunities sites should be on their way to active redevelopment and any of the three sites not in active development ought to be in a targeted pursuit of a development team.
- It is likely new opportunities will arise as momentum is being built in downtown. If the redevelopment of the short-term opportunity sites have been successful and absorbed in the market, it may be time to begin looking for new opportunities where the City can actively work to catalyze additional redevelopment in downtown.

LONG TERM OPPORTUNITY SITES

- There are a number of long term opportunity sites listed in this report that were not selected for a detailed redevelopment study.
- Each site should now be evaluated for its appeal in the market, its ability to catalyze additional redevelopment, its ability to increase demand in downtown and its potential return on investment.

- Those that rise to the top of the list based on the criteria listed above should undergo detailed market, redevelopment and return on investment studies similar to what has been completed as part of the Master Plan.
- Select the 3 most promising sites and determine the necessary steps for the redevelopment of each site.

RETAIL RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

- Retail markets are fickle. Formats, sizes, goods/service offered change yearly. It is always smart to go back and look at the assumptions made in the initial strategy and look for ways to modify and adjust your marketing, incentives, and promotion etc. of the market.
- Conduct a 5 year review of the strengths and weaknesses of your retail recruitment strategy and adjust it to the current market and economy.

UPDATE THE DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

- As the plan is implemented, the City should consider modification and updates to the Master Plan.
- Depending on the degree of changes in the market place and success of the Master Plan implementation, the City should consider a more comprehensive update to ensure the downtown becomes the thriving centerpiece of the City.

BENCHMARK

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