



# MEBANE DOWNTOWN VISION PLAN

THE CITY OF MEBANE, NC

prepared by

**RIVERS & ASSOCIATES, INC.**

**ECONOMIC LEADERSHIP, LLC**

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DECEMBER, 2018

Prepared for

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Mebane, NC**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1: Introduction & Community Profile

### Purpose

The purpose of this study, as stated in the City's request for proposals in late 2017 was as follows:

*While Downtown is not under distress, the City, local business owners, and residents believe it could better serve the community and its own economic needs with a plan addressing its structural and non-structural needs... [The City desires a plan] that will build upon its Downtown District's assets and help resolve its liabilities.*

Our team consisted of Allison Platt, PLA of Rivers & Associates, Inc., and Greg Payne of Economic Leadership, LLC. In addition, The City and our team worked with Darren Rhodes of The Main Street Center (Department of Commerce) to manage the project's public input process.

The team's approach to the plan (from the proposal) included

*...master planning the entire study area to create a distinctive, functional and beautiful public environment, including parking, streetscape, open space, and connections. We will also suggest potential locations for new development that complements the existing historic and urban context. If desired, the work will also include economic/real estate analysis for continued revitalization of historic buildings (especially upper stories) and viability of new development. Our work will be reviewed and validated or revised through public input in collaboration with the Department of Commerce public input strategy. Our concepts will arise from thorough analysis, will be shaped by public and stakeholder input, and conveyed through compelling plans, reports and sketches that help generate public support, funding for implementation, and developer interest.*

## Demographic & Economic Data

*Prepared by Greg Payne of Economic Leadership, LLC*

The overview provides background information for the Downtown Master Plan, with indicators that illustrate the health of the Mebane community, both city-wide and Downtown. The trends indicated here can help point to the best demographic markets for Downtown Mebane to target, and to possible new development opportunities.

The figures point to great strength in Mebane's economic and demographic makeup, which bodes well for the future of the Downtown area. In an era when many small cities and towns are experiencing population declines, Mebane is growing rapidly. Citizens' incomes are high and poverty is low. The average education attainment – particularly important as America moves toward a knowledge-based economy – is higher than that of Alamance County and North Carolina. The biggest negative factor is likely the high percentage of residents commut-

ing away for work, which can reduce the daytime population that supports local retail and service businesses.

***Looking into the future, the greatest threat to Mebane and its Downtown area could be the growth pressures that require thoughtful planning. Housing and other real estate prices could result in decreasing affordability unless demand is accommodated. And in general, those places that fail to plan for growth and change tend to get whatever comes their way, rather than guiding change in a preferred direction.***

For Downtown, opportunities include providing amenities that appeal to Mebane's relatively young population and families with children. Overall, the affluence and growing population of Mebane provide a great opportunity for Downtown to grow in smart ways that build on its attractive character and solidify Downtown's position as the center of the community.



**Study Area and Leakage.** This map illustrates the study area as a red boundary line. Orange striped areas adjacent to the study area illustrate locations where commercial uses are mixing in with residential neighborhoods.



## 2: Analysis

In this section we will present strengths and weaknesses of the Downtown area and analyzes existing conditions as they relate to the task of Downtown redevelopment.

### Study Area and Leakage

The Study area is shown on the drawing below outlined in red. The area is about 117 acres, and It contains a substantial group of attractive historic buildings on the east end including the White Furniture Building (recently rehabbed for residential), and the historic commercial core of the Downtown. The entire study area includes approximately 125 buildings, and about half of these are historic. The new City park to the west is also shown. This will be a major destination for the City once complete; therefore attractive and safe pedestrian, bike, and auto connections from the heart of the Downtown to the park will be an important consideration.

Most of the uses outside the study area are neighborhood residential.

### Circulation/Destination

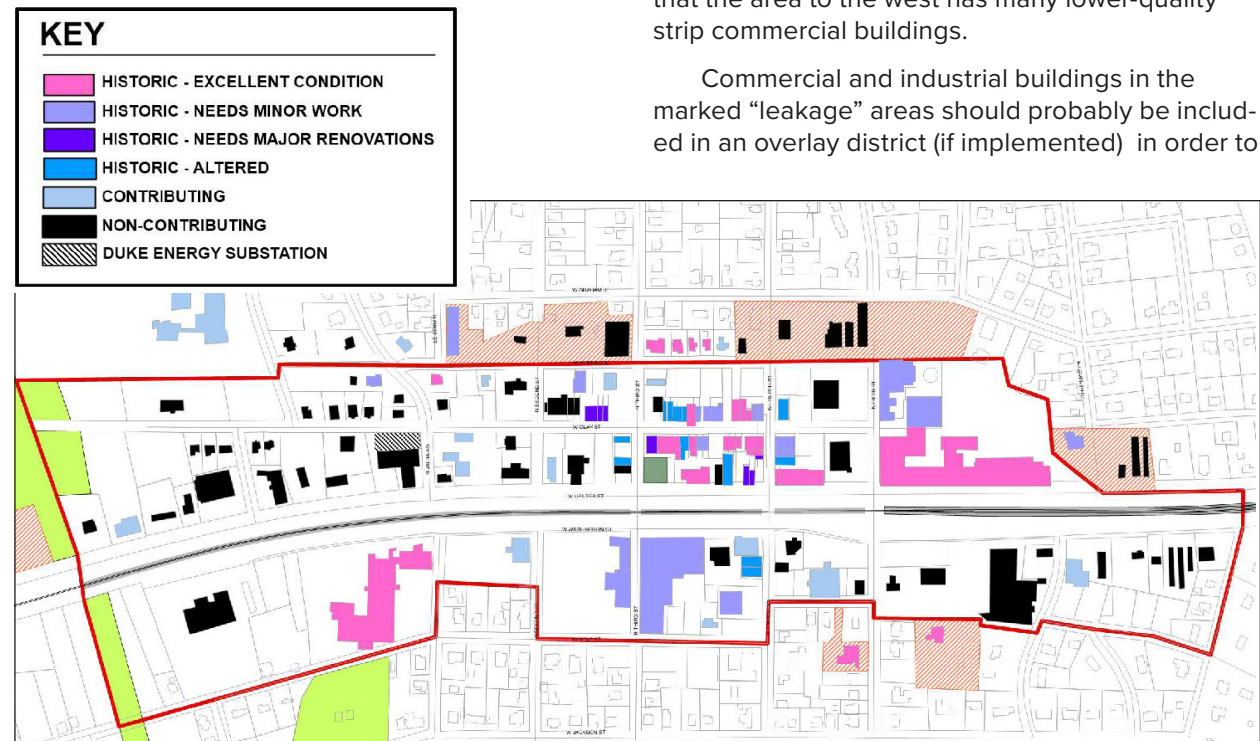
The most notable issues with Circulation in and around the study area are:

- The railroad tracks and the traffic on Center Street, including significant truck traffic. The City has been working with NCDOT to plan for improvements to the NC 119 Bypass which it is hoped will divert some of the truck traffic off Center Street (NC 70) and 5th Street (NC119) in the future.
- In 2018 the NC Department of Transportation Railroad Division also completed a set of recommendations in a Separation Study to increase the safety of rail crossings in Mebane.
- 5th Street (NC 119) is the major route into the Downtown from the south.

Important destinations in or adjacent to the study area include:

- The Downtown historic core for shopping and dining;
- City Hall,;
- The Library;
- The Lofts at White Furniture,; and
- The new City Regional park immediately to the west of the study area.

To ensure the Downtown and the park create synergy, it will be important to create stronger and more attractive connections between the two. Clay Street and Center Street are the two existing connections.



The *Architectural Quality* map (above) shows a concentration of attractive historic commercial buildings in the eastern portion of the study area, with commercial strip uses and some single-family residential elsewhere.

### Architectural Quality

Architectural Quality is an important indicator of the success or future success of a Downtown area throughout the state and the country. People appreciate the authenticity and character of historic buildings, and increasingly seek these out as places to work, shop, and visit, and when making decisions about where to live.

Mebane has a small core of historic commercial buildings between 3rd and 5th Street along both Center and Clay Streets. Historic industrial buildings include the White Furniture Building (The Lofts at White Furniture) and the Kingsdown buildings along Washington Street. Study of this map illustrates that the historic core area is fairly intact, but that the area to the west has many lower-quality strip commercial buildings.

Commercial and industrial buildings in the marked “leakage” areas should probably be included in an overlay district (if implemented) in order to

ensure an attractive transition from the Downtown to the neighborhoods and to protect the nearby residential areas.

### Building Occupancy

The majority of buildings in the study area are occupied, suggesting a very robust economy. Vacant or partially vacant buildings include one portion of The Lofts at White Furniture building complex and vacant land which has not yet been redeveloped but probably will be at some point. Other vacant buildings included two of the historic Kingsdown buildings. Vacancies in the historic core area are already being discussed for new uses, so these are not of great concern, although it should be noted that nearly all upper floors of

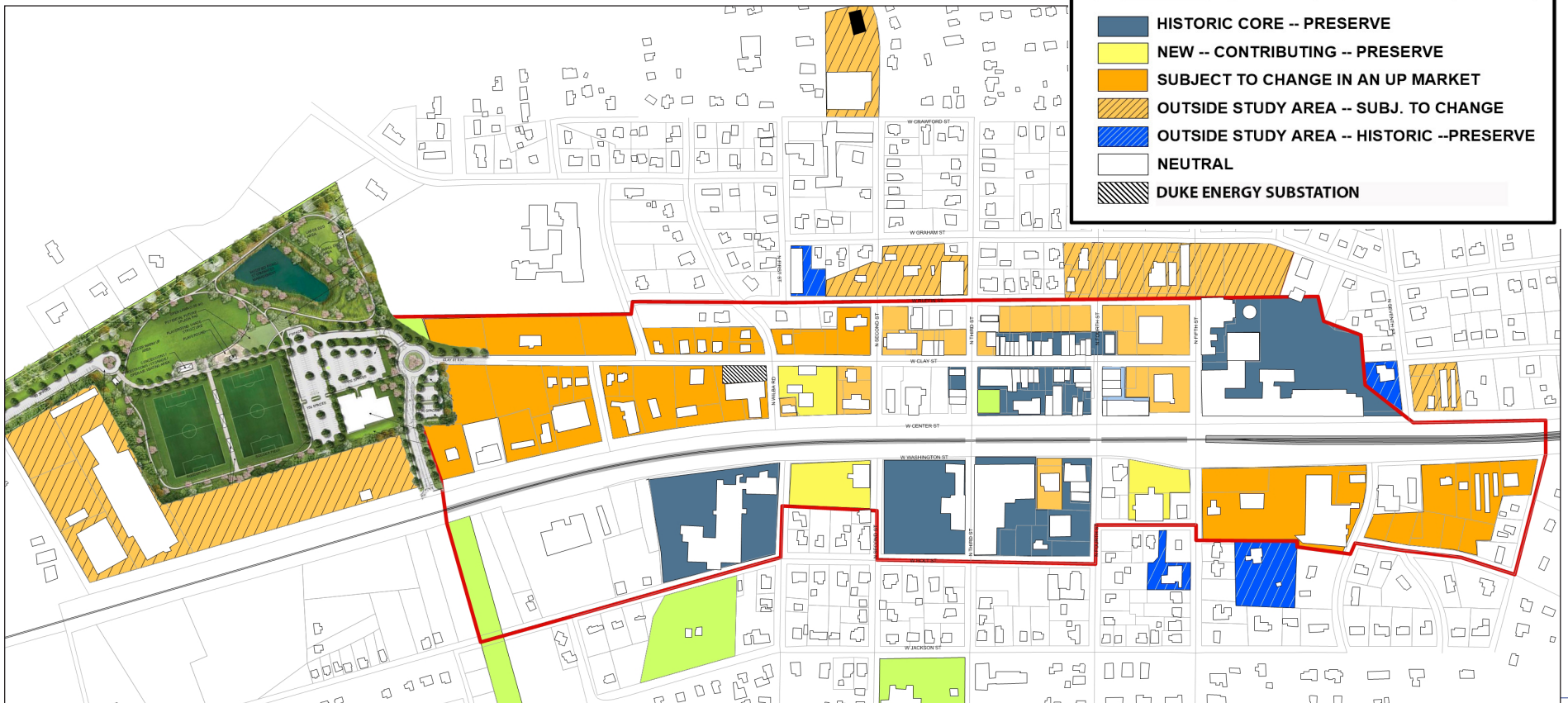
Downtown buildings are vacant, so these represent opportunities for new residential or office uses.

### Parking and Vacant Land

The standard for parking spaces per acre is 170, but allowing for driveways and screening, we have used 150 spaces per acre as a conservative estimate. The key for this drawing reveals that there are over 4,000 existing or potential parking spaces within the study area. The key to providing enough parking will be shared parking and improvement of gravel parking lots, especially in the historic core area.

The primary focus of many historic core business owners for additional Downtown parking is the gravel lots to the north of the businesses along

*The drawing below shows the **Summary Analysis**. The map shows areas of historic structures to be preserved (blue); new contributing buildings (yellow); buildings subject to change over time (orange); and buildings outside the study area that do not conform to the surrounding residential and so are also subject to change (striped). The solid orange buildings are considered subject to change because they are commercial strip. es that are not pedestrian-friendly, Denser, more walk-able uses will probably yield a much higher return on the property over time. All properties subject to change depend on a willing buyer and seller.*





Clay Street between 4th and 3rd Streets. There are several owners of these properties and it will probably require City initiative and investment to accomplish improvements to this area for parking.

The City should continue with and strengthen the trend toward lower parking requirements Downtown and should encourage shared parking.

## Summary Analysis

The Summary Analysis drawing below draws some conclusions that will shape decisions moving forward. These should be viewed with the understanding that changes in use / building type will only occur when there is a willing seller and buyer. That is, all uses are grandfathered as long as they are properly maintained. An overlay district may in some cases mean, however, that when property changes use that any new overlay district regulations will go into effect.

To summarize:

- Properties shown in dark blue are part of the historic core (including also the Kingsdown properties south of the railroad). These buildings are very important to the history and character of the Downtown and the entire community, and should be preserved and restored unless there is absolutely no alternative (e.g. in case of a devastating fire).
- Buildings shown in yellow are new, but are significant contributors to the character of the study area, and should remain in place.
- A third category (shown in orange) includes buildings that will probably be subject to change in a strong market. This assumes continued growth of the community and the Downtown, and as stated above, is subject to a willing seller and buyer. Similar areas are shown adjacent to the study area in the same color but with black hatching.

- Areas that have no designation are mostly neutral in terms of use and appearance. Market forces and owner decisions will determine the future of these buildings.

## 3: Concepts

### Goals

Elements and goals that shaped the concepts for the Vision Plan include the following:

- Improved public environment in the Downtown, including street trees, public restrooms, additional/improved public parking, permanent location for Farmers Market, improved/safer bike access, and removal of overhead utility lines);
- Improved connections from the Downtown to the new regional park and to/from the neighborhoods through bike paths, improved sidewalks and zoning regulations;
- Improved/expanded Downtown parking;
- Complete streets, including adequate provisions for walking, cycling, and handicap access;
- Historic Preservation;
- Expansion of the Downtown core to accommodate future growth and expansion of offerings;
- Ensuring quality development;
- Improved signage and marketing to bring more people Downtown.

### Overlay District

It is the intention of the City to explore the creation of an overlay district or districts for the study area. The goal of creating an overlay district is to find a better balance between the dense historic urban core and the somewhat disorganized commercial and industrial uses at the edges of the study area. Unlike traditional zoning, an overlay

district does not dictate what the internal uses of buildings are or will be, only their form.

The exact location of the overlay district or districts may change slightly based on findings of the plan, especially in the designated “leakage” areas that transitions from the Downtown to the neighborhoods. At the present time the study area is divided into uses such as Commercial, Single-Family Residential, Industrial, and so on. Since there is no way to predict exactly what future uses will be, the more important determining factor will be what the buildings look like, how they are placed on the site, and how they support the goals of the plan regarding quality, walkability, and so on.

### Building Form

The plan on the next page demonstrates the different building types that would be included in any overlay district. The uses are based on the available block sizes and existing uses to remain (e.g. the Downtown core). They are as follows:

- The red ovals represent the historic Downtown core.



*Appropriate Building Types for Downtown Expansion. These buildings, though modern, are harmonious with the downtown core.*



- Red striped areas represent an expansion of the commercial core area. Buildings here would be a minimum of two stories, with three allowed by right and four with review. These buildings would have commercial, office or service uses on the ground floor and residential or office above.
- Purple striped areas represent smaller-scale mostly residential buildings that would form a transition from the core area to the neighborhoods. These might be townhouses, or in some cases Live-Work units.
- Green striped areas represent larger-scaled buildings, primarily residential. Near the park there might be supporting uses, such as sports-related or perhaps a YMCA. Commercial uses are not recommended in these areas because they will compete with

- the Downtown, although limited uses that serve the park patrons might work.
- Blue areas represent public uses including City Hall, the library, a fire station, and a school.

### Public Improvements

In order to encourage investment in the Downtown, the City should consider key investments in infrastructure and planning. The map illustrating these recommendations is on page 22. These include:

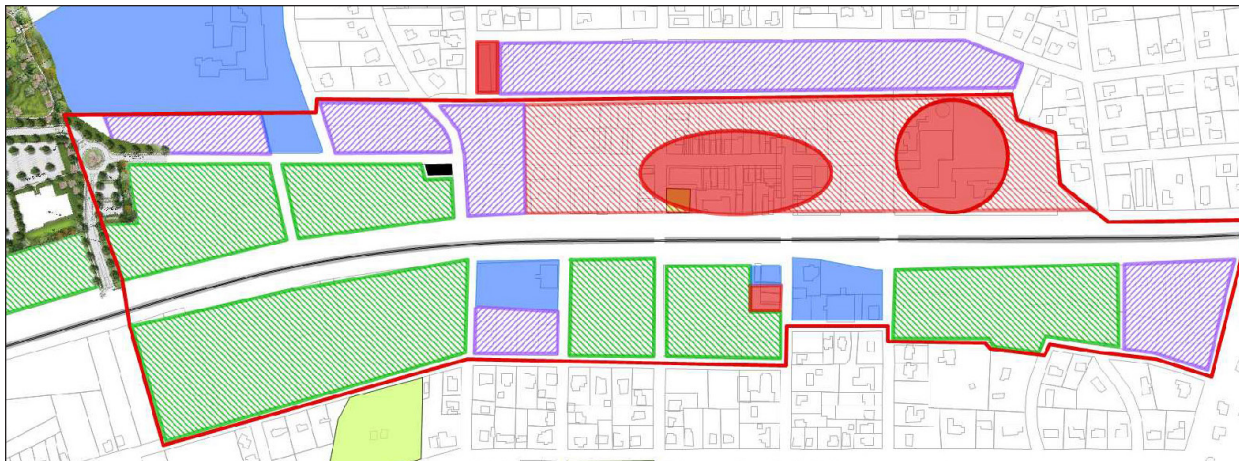
- Major improvements to Clay Street between 5th and 2nd, and on the north side of Center Street between 5th and 3rd, and the connecting streets between them. This would include moving or burying overhead lines, new sidewalks (and expanded

- sidewalks on Clay), lights, and trees, and upgrading of underground utilities;
- Adding a 2-way protected bike lane on the south side of Center Street;
- Upgrading Third to include wider sidewalks and pedestrian amenities from north of Clay south to Washington in order to encourage pedestrian traffic across the railroad tracks (The crossing is being paid for by NCDOT as part of the TSS implementation on 3rd St. between Washington and Center Streets);
- Upgrading other major street sidewalks (Washington Street, and the remainder of Clay and Center Streets within the study area,) to include 5-8' sidewalks, street trees, and upgraded lights);
- Continuous handicap accessible sidewalks in the entire study area at a minimum of 3-5' wide (this is already the City standard), with an goal of providing walks where they currently do no exist.

### Recommended Cross-Section for Clay Street

The function of successful downtowns and downtown streets has changed over the past 30-40 years. The downtown is no longer the place to shop for personal and household supplies. Rather, successful downtowns are places for entertainment. Restaurants, bars, micro-breweries, boutique shopping, and personal services now predominate in downtowns. In order for these uses to flourish, an attractive setting for strolling and dining is an essential part of the equation.

Towns and cities that have upgraded their downtown environments are realizing increased investment, improved image, and increased tax base that benefits the entire community. Examples are Danville, VA and New Bern and Goldsboro, NC.



**Building Form.** This map illustrates proposed building types for the study area. The red shows existing historic core buildings, and the red stripes shows an expansion of the downtown core and building form. Purple striped areas show small scale buildings such as townhouses and live-work units that can form a transition from the denser downtown to the single-family residential nearby. Green striped areas may be suitable for larger buildings such as apartments or uses such as a “Y.” The larger buildings with wider setbacks and a more “campus-like” site plans will more easily fit in the larger blocks shown.

Clay Street has an approximate 60-foot ROW. This is quite narrow, and the allocation of space to vehicles vs. pedestrians tilts heavily towards vehicles.

The second alternative is shown below. This includes (2) 14' sidewalks, each 4' wider than existing by eliminating one row of parallel parking (and replacing it nearby), (2) 12' moving lanes, and one 8' parallel parking lane. See pages 24-27 for larger drawings and a more detailed discussion of the alternatives.

This second alternative achieves more valuable sidewalk space by removing one lane of parking on the north side allocating an additional 4' to sidewalks on both sides of the street. This provides

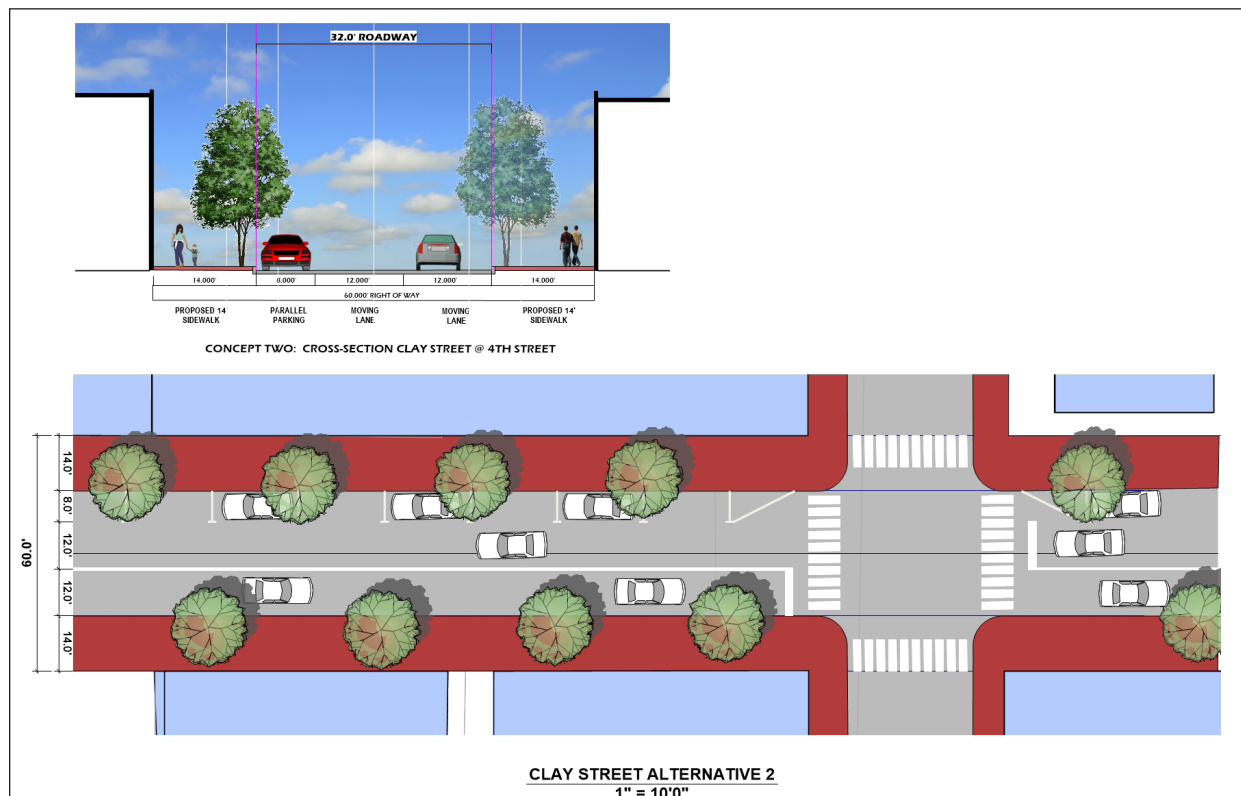
two 12' moving lanes, one 8' parking lane, and two 14' sidewalks. Fourteen feet is adequate for street trees and site furniture (benches, trash receptacles, bike racks etc.), space for two people to move along the sidewalk, and space for sidewalk dining at least two compact tables wide. If a cost-effective method of relocating the overhead lines can be found, then this provides space to create a very unique and beautiful pedestrian-friendly streetscape along the most historic blocks of Clay Street from Fourth to Third, and on the blocks on either side to help encourage the expansion of the core district on Clay.

### Center Street Improvements

The ROW on Center Street from Fifth to Third is approximately 65'. The roadway narrows on

either side of this although the ROW does not. In the areas with primarily historic buildings from Fifth to Third the space allocation varies with left turn lanes, but on average there are two 17' moving lanes (subdivided to include a left-turn lane at the intersections), two 7' parallel parking lanes, and one 17' sidewalk.

An important goal for Center Street was to fit bike lanes into the cross section as recommended by the Bike/Ped plan. Concept Two addresses this by locating an 8' two-way bike path on the south side of the road. The bike path would be divided from moving traffic with a curbed 3' buffer. To make this work, the parking on the south side of the road would be removed. Because there are only three railroad crossings and no driveways on this side



**Bike Lane Example:** The photo above shows a separated bike/pedestrian lane. The one recommended for Mebane would probably be asphalt and include 2-way bike traffic only (no pedestrians). It would include a recommended 3' curbed buffer, shown on the right in the photo..



of the road between Fifth Street and Moore Road (almost a mile) this is the safest route for bikes. This concept also allows for two 14' moving lanes, an 8' parking lane on the north side, and the same existing 17' sidewalks that are shown as improved.

The second alternative drawing is shown below. See pages 28-32 for larger drawings and a more detailed discussion of the alternatives.

### Connecting Streets & Railroad Crossings

The railroad tracks have created streets that favor east-west movement and that tend to discourage north-south movement, especially for pedestrians. Fifth, Fourth, and Third are the only locations

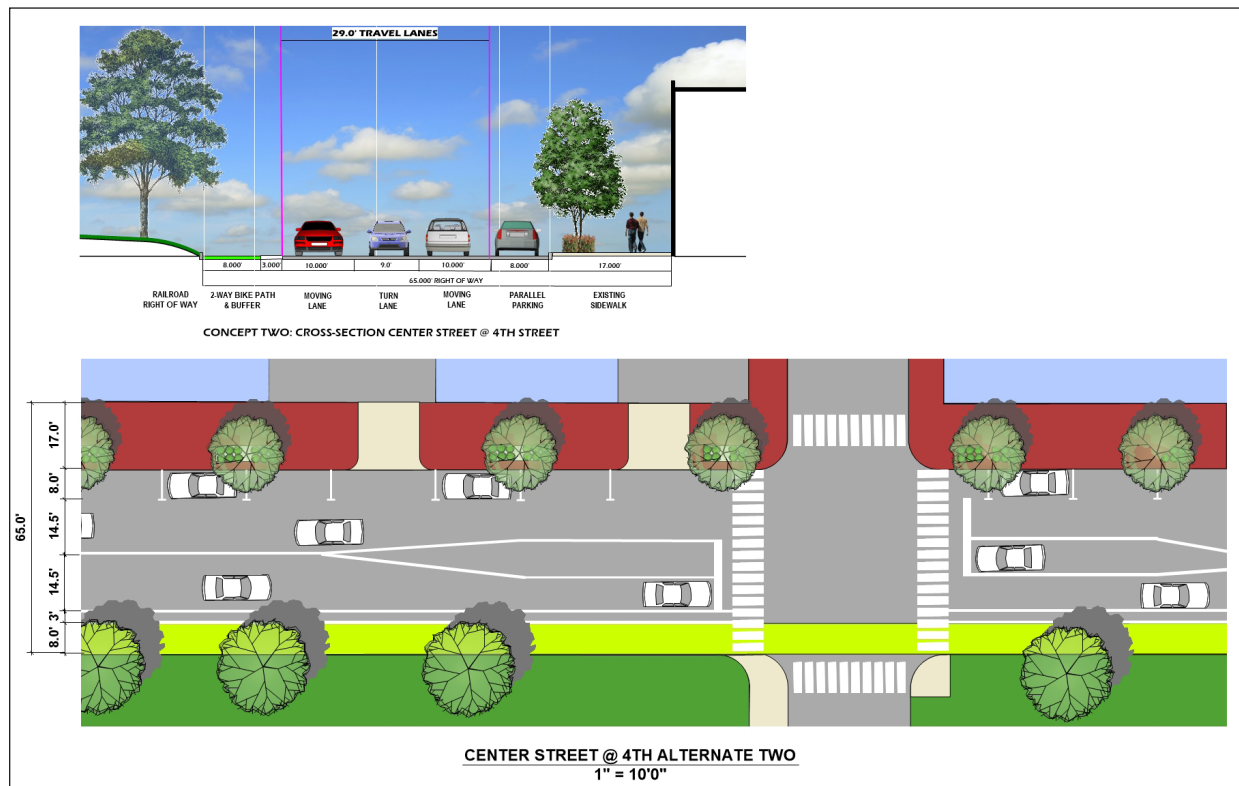
in the Downtown where there are crossings. Fifth is the most congested intersection due to the many cars that enter the Downtown via Fifth Street from the south and from the exit off 40 to the Tanger Outlets. This will remain a major gateway into the Downtown, making it problematic for pedestrian crossings. Third Street is a better and quieter alternative, as is Fourth Street.

At a minimum, the sidewalks along Third through Fifth between Clay and Center Streets should be improved to connect these two important streets.

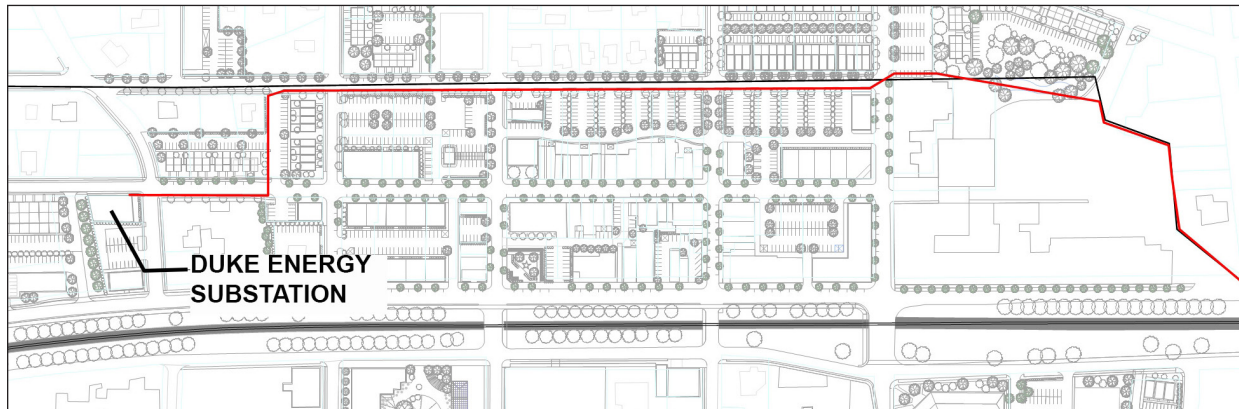
Further, we recommend that Third Street be improved from Ruffin to Washington to create a strong north-south pedestrian/bike connection, which



**Pedestrian/Bike Railroad Safety Enhancements.** The top photo existing conditions looking from Center across the intersection at Third. The bottom photo shows two sets of gates and flashing lights in each direction, one for vehicles and one for pedestrians and bikes. Lights similar to the crossing lights used in intersections are also a possibility.







**Recommended Overhead Line Relocation.** This map shows how the regional overhead lines that run down Clay Street could be relocated in the central core area of the downtown between Second and Fifth. The lines that serve buildings along Clay Street would be buried in Clay Street when other utilities are upgraded. This will allow major improvements to Clay Street and encourage economically significant investment in the expanded core area.

currently does not exist. If new development occurs along the street (e.g. Farmers Market, expanded Karma Cafe) and near the intersection of Third and Washington Streets (Kingsdown redevelopment), this will encourage pedestrians to explore more of the Downtown on foot.

In order for the crossing to succeed, upgrades to the crossing appearance and safety features will be needed. Crossing enhancements could include improved walkways and possibly additional barriers and lights exclusively for pedestrians. Aesthetic improvements could include burying or re-routing the overhead lines and more effectively consolidating/designing the railroad equipment.

### Overhead Utility Lines

The overhead utility lines in the Downtown are much more dominant than in most communities. The City did look at burying the lines in within the Downtown in 2003 and discovered the price was prohibitive.

Along Center Street in the Downtown, it appears that the lines only include power to the street lights, so these lines could be buried at little cost when other infrastructure improvements are planned.

Clay Street and many of the cross streets, however are visually dominated by overhead lines. For Clay Street between Second and Fifth, it may be possible to relocate the regional lines one block north to the south side of Ruffin where there is very little development, and to combine this with burying only the lines that service the buildings along this section of Clay.

It is our hope that Duke Energy will be a partner in this process because there will be a potential for ~266,000 s.f. of additional commercial and residential development in the expanded core area alone.

(see Section 4: Vision Plan, next page)

### 4: Vision Plan

The Vision Plan (shown below) is the result of public and City Input throughout analysis and concept development. It is very important to understand that this plan is visionary, and intended to occur over the next ten years or more. The buildings shown will not look exactly like what is drawn, and may be built in other locations or configurations.

Redevelopment within the study area depends on a willing seller and a willing buyer, and on acquisition of properties that will allow redevelopment in keeping with the Overlay District.

There are 6 kinds of new buildings and buildings to remain shown in the plan. These include:

- **Historic and contributing** buildings to remain shown in tan with no roof lines drawn in;

- New higher density **Mixed-Use** (ground floor commercial and upper story residential or other use (e.g. office), shown in pink;
- New **Medium-Density Live-work and Residential**. Live-Work shown in pink, town-homes in yellow;
- New **higher density Residential** shown in yellow;
- **Public** uses shown in blue;
- Other **uses to remain**, shown in grey. These buildings, mostly single-family residential, could remain or might be acquired for redevelopment. They remain on the plan not to necessarily suggest they should remain, but to illustrate that change will be gradual.

New parking lots are shown with parking spaces delineated and are totaled by block in the drawing on page 48-49. Existing parking to remain is shown without spaces drawn and are not enumerated since they do not add to the parking available. Before Clay Street improvements are made, it will be necessary to replace displaced parking elsewhere.

This executive summary includes some of the highlights of the Vision Plan. Refer to Section 4 for block-by-block description of all the elements of the plan.



**Vision Plan.** See Section 4 for enlargements of individual blocks for clarity. The regional park drawing is shown for context.

**Plan Legend:** Tan buildings are existing historic; yellow/tan buildings are residential; pink buildings are commercial-mixed use or live-work; blue buildings are public; grey buildings are existing non-historic buildings; and purple as several possible uses (see page 44).



## Typical Clay Street Streetscape Improvements

The sketch below illustrates Third Street improvements including widened sidewalks, a redeveloped Karma Cafe, and the relocation of regional overhead lines. These improvements between Fifth and Second are the most important physical improvements because they will set the tone for improvements and show leadership on the part of the City. This will result in increased private investment, increased support for implementation projects from public agencies, and increased recognition for Mebane across the region and the state.



**Proposed Clay Street Improvements.** The “before” photo (above right) and “after” sketch shows what Clay Street could look like with overhead lines moved to Ruffin, widened sidewalks, and trees. The removal of on-street parking from the north side of the street in the three blocks between Fifth and Second allows enough additional sidewalk to allow sidewalk dining. This drawing also shows the addition to the Karma Cafe building with a courtyard added on Clay.



## Improved Parking North of Clay

Before Clay Street improvements are made, it will be necessary to replace displaced parking elsewhere and supply additional parking, as well. Many citizens, merchants and property owners have suggested that the gravel lot north of the buildings on Clay between 4th and 3rd would be ideal for this purpose if it was improved. The City has expressed interest in leasing or buying this

property in order to improve it for public parking. A possible concept for this space is shown below, including a “before” photo and “after” sketch.



**Ruffin Street Parking Improvements.** The “before” view of the gravel parking lot between Fourth and Third, Clay and Ruffin shows a gravel surface with informal parking. The “after” view above shows a walkway along the back of the buildings, the connection to Clay Street through the alley (center) paved and landscaped parking, and concepts for improved rear entries and outdoor areas at the rear of buildings.





**Historic Core Area and Expansion.** This plan shows the core historic buildings, shown in tan, from the Lofts at White Furniture at the lower right to the Second Street on the left. Also included are some recommended changes to the leakage areas north of Ruffin.

## Historic Core Area and Expansion

The plan above shows the existing historic core (buildings in tan), and the expansion of this type of commercial/mixed use buildings to the west (Second Street) and as infill to the east between Fourth and Fifth including opportunities for improved and expanded parking. There is currently about 140,000 square feet of existing or potential (vacant) commercial space in the historic Downtown, and if the partially vacant shopping center is added to that, the total is 188,000 square feet, so the plan shown could potentially double the square feet of retail over 10 years, although it is best to remember that the market will dictate the need for additional commercial space over time.

The only new (or expanded) building in the central blocks is at the northeast corner of Clay and Third Streets -- the Karma Cafe Site. Many citizens have suggested they would like to see an “urban grocery/deli” in the Downtown, similar to one that existed in the past elsewhere in the Downtown, and an expanded Karma Cafe might be a good site for that. A concept of what this might look like can be seen in the sketch on page x.

The proposal for core expansion recommends continuing the same building type and site orientation to the east and west of the historic core so that the area has a consistent, high-quality, pedestrian-friendly Downtown image throughout. Buildings are placed at the right of way (ROW) and parking

is located to the back of buildings and/or in the center of blocks wherever possible. Reconfigured parking north of Clay Street off Ruffin Street would yield at least 340 parking spaces. New and/or reconfigured parking on the blocks between Clay and Center Streets would yield at least 280 parking spaces.

The two blocks to the east of the historic core include infill building that will create a sense of enclosure and encourage residents of the Lofts at White Furniture to walk Downtown, and will also encourage pedestrians to walk toward Fifth Street to explore new commercial uses between Fourth and Fifth. It will also revitalize Fifth Street, which is currently vacant or underutilized between Center and Ruffin.

The block to the west of the historic core has a few buildings to remain along Third Street, but consists of mostly new buildings. On the northwest corner of Third and Clay Streets, the existing parking lot is shown with a new shelter and an office/public restrooms. Frontages on both sides of Clay Street and on the north side of Center Street are shown with new commercial/mixed use buildings.

Some possible reconfigurations of building uses and orientation are shown in the so-called “leakage areas” to the north of Ruffin. These areas currently have strip commercial uses that have “crept” into the residential neighborhoods, and these concepts illustrate how smaller scale residential or Live-Work units would be more complementary to the residential uses around them. Live-work units are also shown in Second as a transition from larger scale mixed use buildings to more residential uses further to the west.

Refer to Section 4 for more detailed discussion of these blocks.

## Residential Redevelopment Opportunities Between the Core and the Regional Park

One of the goals of the plan was to connect the Downtown to the new regional park through more appropriate uses and improved sidewalks and bike paths. The blocks closest to the park are very large, and because of this, they are more likely to be developed as larger buildings. Along Clay Street, some townhomes are shown, which are more appropriate for this narrower street. In places where larger building will require more parking, it is recommended that there be a setback to parking with screening, lighting and landscaping to create a more park-like connection.

Curved, landscaped sidewalks and landscaping are also shown along the north side of Center, where larger building would require a greater setback from the ROW (and from traffic). The south side of Center shows where the protected 2-way

bike lanes would be located. These public improvements will create a more bike-friendly image for the area and a much more gracious gateway into the Downtown from the west.

Some of the existing single-family residential buildings remain along Clay Street. These may be opportunities in the future to infill with slightly higher density, but still small-scaled townhomes in the future.

The Duke Energy substation at the southwest corner of Wilba and Clay Streets presents a difficult problem in creating an attractive connection between the Downtown and the regional park. We understand that this cannot be moved and suggest screening the substation with opaque fences and landscaping.

The purple building shown closest to the driveway into the regional park is one possible location for a YMCA, which the community would like to be located near Downtown. If that does not turn out

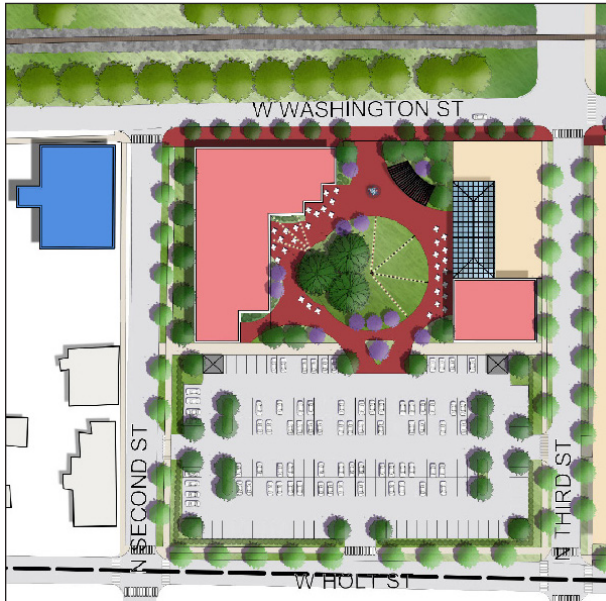
to be the right location for this use, however, this building could be a privately owned community use that would benefit from proximity to the park, or it could easily become other uses to compliment Downtown. We do not recommend commercial uses that might compete with the Downtown.

Refer to the discussion of incremental development on page 43 of Section 4 to understand how these blocks could be developed over time, since it is unlikely (especially given the current property values in Mebane) that an entire block could be acquired at one time.



*This portion of the plan consists primarily of residential use to create a new walkable higher-density neighborhood and to connect with regional park with the downtown through improved pedestrian and bike connections.*





### Development South of Washington Street -- Kingsdown Site

The plan (left) and sketch (below) for the Kingsdown site between Washington and Holt Streets, Third and Second is shown on the next page. This site is mostly vacant, with a few large trees and informal gravel parking areas. The site plan shows the original building in the upper left of the plan integrated into a dining/catering facility. A new building is added on the south end of the existing building that could provide kitchen facilities and second floor catering and meeting rooms. Between the two buildings an atrium is shown that would provide year-round dining and a distinctive character for the development. There is also a substantial open space between the two buildings that include outdoor dining and a small stage. This

space could be privately owned but available to the public during set hours.

The building on the upper left of the plan would be commercial on the first floor with 3 or 4 levels of residential above it. Parking would be at the rear of the property and it would require landscaping and screening on three sides to form an attractive transition to the neighborhood.

The plan represents 35,500 square feet of new commercial, and 51,000 s.f. of new residential (condos or apartments), for a total of 86,500 s.f. of new development. There are approximately 150 new parking spaces at the south end of the site.

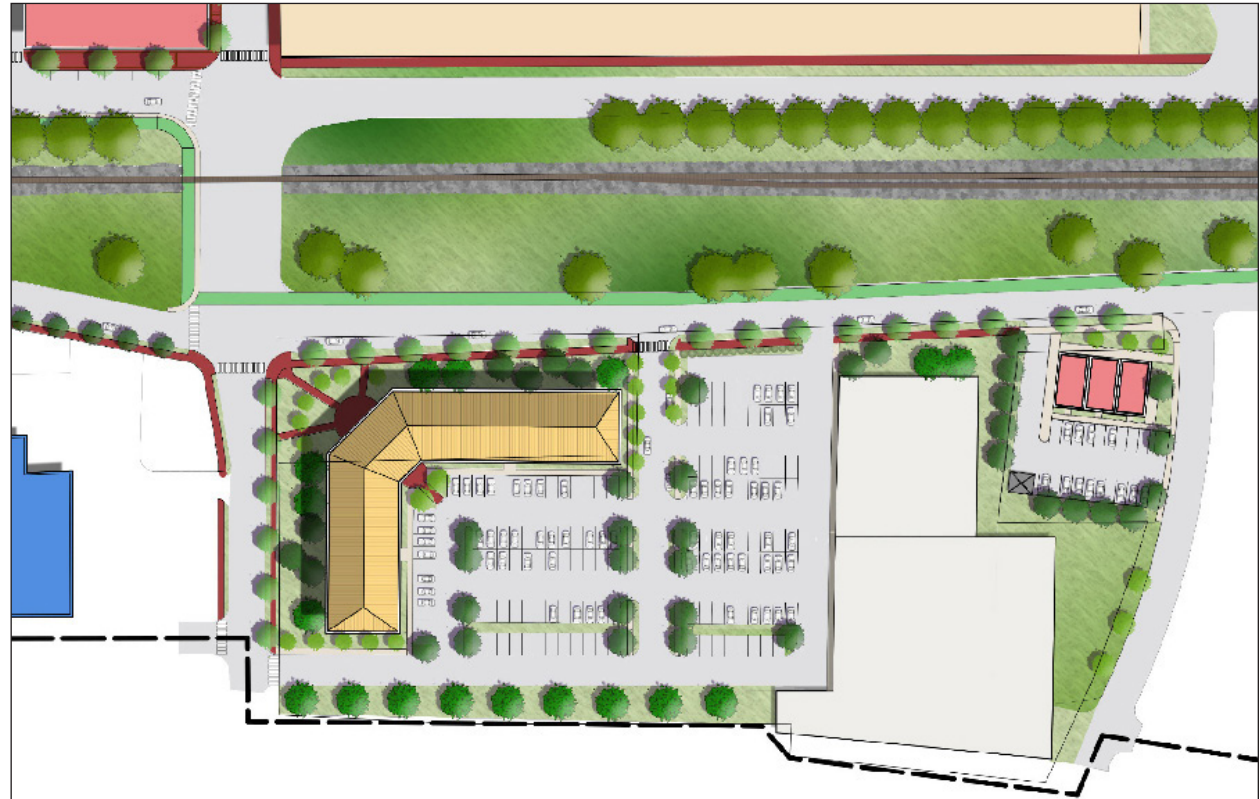


### Development South of Washington Street -- Shopping Center Site

The partially vacant shopping center at the corner of Washington and Fifth Streets is another appropriate site for redevelopment. The concept for this site is shown at right. A new “L” shaped high-density residential or mixed use building is shown on the northwest corner of these properties. This is an important gateway corner into the Downtown for those entering along Fifth Street from the south, and a new building on this corner will improve the appearance of this corner and complement the Lofts at White Furniture building across the railroad tracks.

The western end of this property is currently mostly parking with two small buildings set in the middle. The shopping center (with a former grocery building now reused as a bowling alley) sits in the middle of the site, and a recently-approved redevelopment is shown on the northeast corner of the block.

The main portion of the shopping center remains in this concept, although in the future it could be replaced with additional residential or mixed use with a facade along Washington, or the former grocery store might be converted back to a grocery, since many citizens expressed an interest in having this use Downtown.



### Development Potential -- New Commercial & Residential

The plan on the next page shows the block numbers for reference, and the table shows the square feet per block and per level, divided into commercial and residential. These are shown in square feet instead of number of units because units can vary greatly in size. These figures assume:

- **Mixed Use:** Three levels -- 1 commercial and 2 residential (or other);
- **Live-Work:** Three levels -- 1 commercial/office and 2 residential;

- **Townhomes:** 2 levels;
- **Higher Density Residential:** Three levels of residential (but could be four);
- **A YMCA Building or other use (purple building):** one story gym (right) and 3 story classroom, exercise room, offices.

*Including the designed areas to the north of the study area, this produces about 173,000 square feet of new commercial space (not including the 55,000 potential YMCA building) and ~620,000 square feet of residential space, or a total new development potential over 10 years of ~850,000 square feet.*

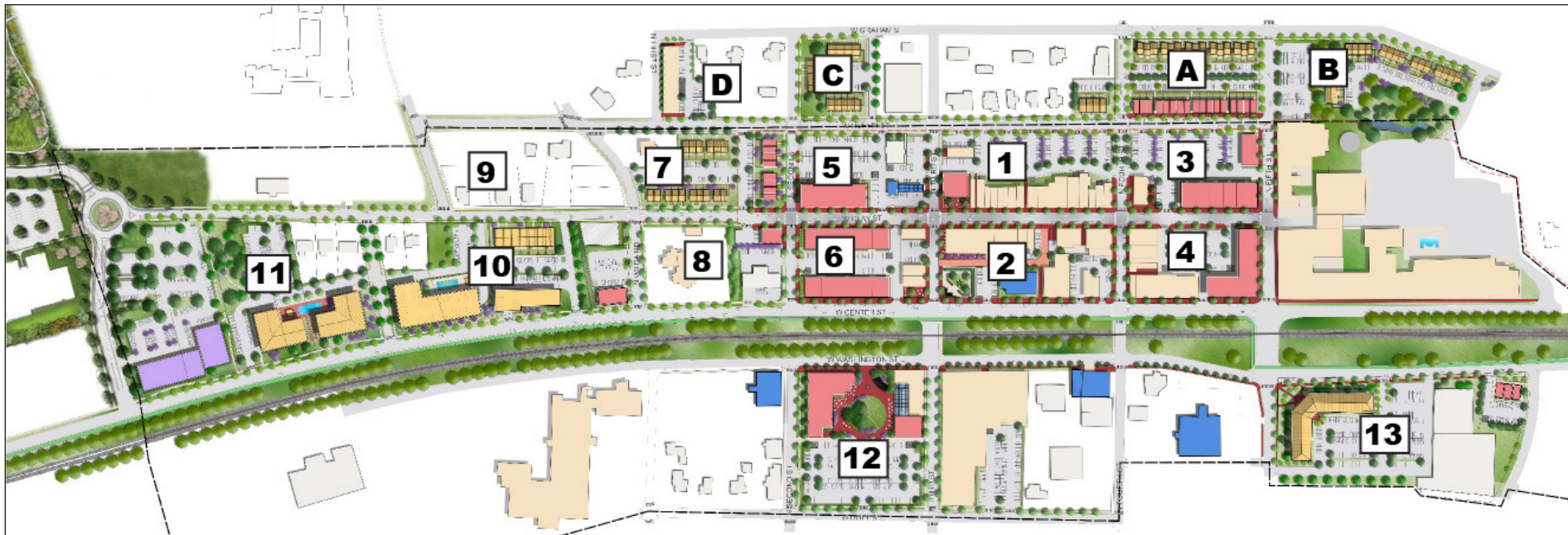


At 1,000 square feet per unit average for residential, this yields 620 condos, townhomes, or apartments. Within this, it includes 25 new Live-Work Units with 800 square feet of retail each, or a total of 20,000 new square feet for office, retail and service (and possibly limited restaurant), as a subset of the overall commercial total of 173,000.

There is currently about 140,000 square feet of existing or potential (historic but vacant) commercial space in the historic Downtown, and if the partially vacant shopping center is added to that, the total is 188,000 square feet, so the plan shown could potentially double the square feet of retail over 10 years, although it is best to remember that the market will dictate the need for additional commercial space over time.

STUDY AREA	NEW SF/LEVEL	NEW COMMERCIAL	NEW RESIDENTIAL	TOTAL
BLOCK 1	16,500	16,500		16,500
BLOCK 2				0
BLOCK 3	21,500	21,500	43,000	64,500
BLOCK 4	18,000	18,000	36,000	54,000
BLOCK 5	13,700	13,700	27,400	41,100
BLOCK 6	30,000	30,000	60,000	90,000
BLOCK 7	6,400	6,400	34,800	41,200
BLOCK 8	3,000	3,000	6,000	9,000
BLOCK 9				0
BLOCK 10	42,700	4,000	153,000	157,000
BLOCK 11		55,140 ★	82,000	137,140
BLOCK 12	25,500	35,500	51,000	86,500
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>203,740</b>	<b>493,200</b>	<b>696,940</b>
BLOCK A	29,000	24,000	58,000	58,000
BLOCK B	24,000	0	48,000	72,000
BLOCK C	10,500	0	21,000	21,000
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>24,000</b>	<b>127,000</b>	<b>151,000</b>
<b>TOTALS (SF)</b>		<b>227,740</b>	<b>620,200</b>	<b>847,940</b>

★ PROPOSED YMCA or OTHER USE



Block Numbers correspond to the table above.

### New Parking

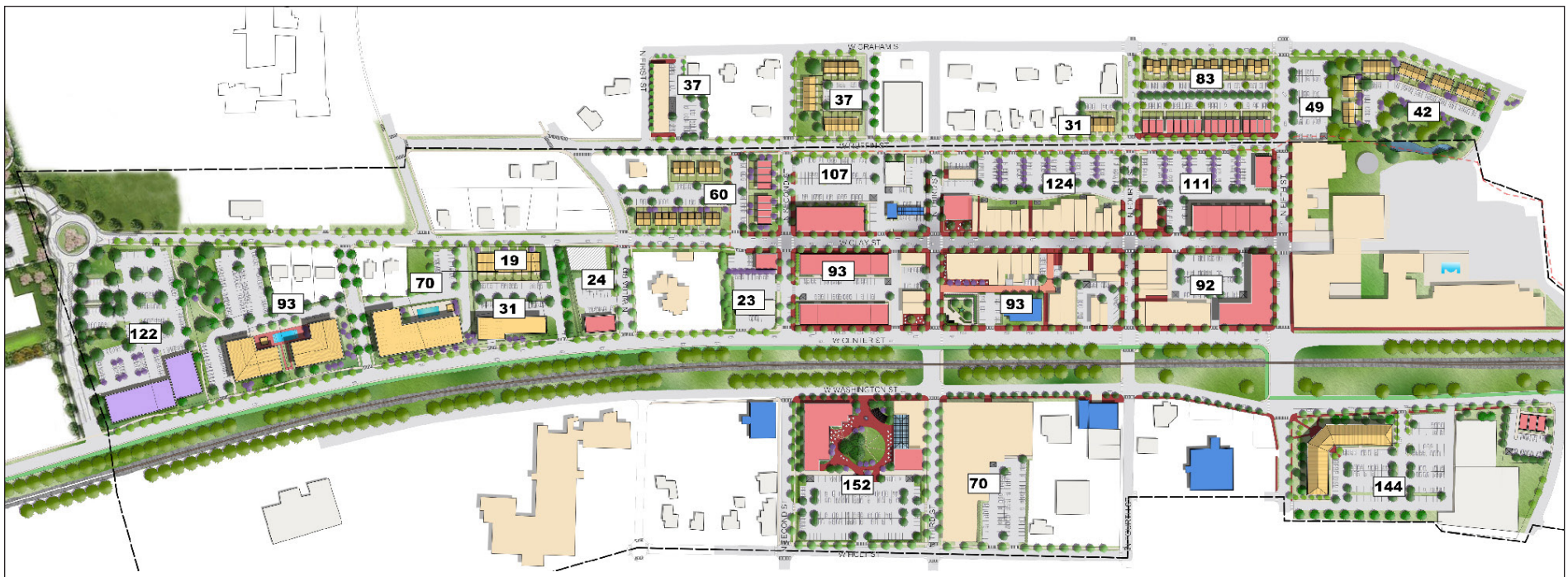
An illustration showing new or reconfigured parking in the study area and the designed areas to the north is shown on the next page. The totals also add in parking on the street, and in some cases this is new parking, as along Ruffin Street.

Parking will be an important component of the plan. The City has expressed interest in leasing or purchasing the gravel lot north of Clay Street between 4th and 3rd. This lot should be completed before Clay Street is improved to provide parking during construction. General access parking (shared parking) will be desirable in this block and throughout the expanded core area (6 blocks).

**Total new or reconfigured parking north of the railroad tracks equals 1,062 spaces. Parking**

**within the six block area of Fifth to Second and Center to Ruffin equals 620 spaces.** In addition, parking shown in the designed portions of the plan north of the study area equals an additional 279 spaces, including new street parking on the north side of Ruffin. Parking south of the railroad tracks adds another 362 spaces, for a grand total of about 1700 spaces. Most townhome and Live-Work units are shown with 2 spaces per unit. Higher density units are figured at about 1.5 spaces per unit. See page 36 for a sketch of the parking lot north of Clay Street between Fourth and Third.

*Below: The plan below shows the number of parking spaces per block in the plan.*





## 5.0 Implementation Strategies

While it is clear that priorities always shift as opportunities and challenges present themselves, the implementation steps below are necessary to keep the plan moving forward towards implementation. Tasks are divided into priorities. Early tasks are essential to getting everything in place to make visible progress toward concrete goals. Those listed as **ongoing** start at the appropriate time and constitute long-term goals.

### Short-Term Tasks/Projects (3-6 months)

- **Adopt the Plan.**  
*Timeline:* As soon as possible.  
*Responsibility:* Council and City Manager.
- **Convene an Advisory Committee.** This committee should include stakeholders from all groups committed to Mebane's future--property and business owners, the County, the City, the COG, Advisors and others as needed. Their responsibilities will include advice, support, and advocacy. This committee could also be important in establishing Mebane as a Main Street community, and serve as a transition until full status is established.  
*Timeline:* as soon as possible.  
*Responsibility:* Council, community leaders, and organizations interested in downtown revitalization.
- **Apply for Main Street Program.** This program provides access to additional downtown development assistance, capacity-building, publicity, and funding.  
*Timeline:* after first implementation project is underway.  
*Responsibility:* City Manager, Council and Advisory Committee.
- **Develop Standards for an Overlay District.** City Staff and a Council representative should begin work with an Advisory Committee to establish the guidelines for a form-based code that will establish the standards for new development in the overlay district.  
*Timeline:* As soon as possible.  
*Responsibility:* City staff, Council, consultants if needed, and the Advisory Committee.
- **Explore Lease/Sale Agreement(s) To Increase Public Parking Downtown,** in particular, the gravel lot north of Clay Street between Fourth and Third.  
*Timeline:* As soon as possible.  
*Responsibility:* Council and City Manager.
- **Consider Tactical Urbanism Projects to Generate Interest in Downtown Revitalization.**  
*Timeline:* Begin within 6 months.  
*Responsibility:* Advisory Group, Civic and Merchants groups with support, coordination (and funds) from the Council and City Manager.
- **Explore costs and design for Farmers Market,** probably including public restrooms.  
*Timeline:* As soon as possible.  
*Responsibility:* Council and City Manager.
- **Identify a Streetscape Implementation Project Funded Primarily by the City.** Make sure this project is realistic and significant, since further efforts and outside funding will depend on its success. If some assistance is available for this first project, that is great, but the primary impetus should come from the City. Planning should include financing mechanisms and preparation of construction drawings.  
*Timeline:* by the end of 2019.  
*Responsibility:* Council and City Manager.
- **Establish Financial Incentives for Facade Improvements and New Businesses.** This type of grant/incentive program is normally the responsibility of a Main Street Program, but could be administered by the Advisory Committee with leadership from a Downtown Manager. This or another arrangements would be useful to encourage new businesses, upper floor conversions, and facade improvements. Tools can include revolving loan funds, percentage matches, or grants.  
*Timeline:* as soon as possible, **ongoing.**  
*Responsibility:* Council and City Manager, local banks, Downtown Manager, Merchants organizations, eventually to be administered by a Main Street Program.
- **Begin Ongoing Advocacy with Funding Agencies and Elected Representatives.** Set up a schedule and assign leads (individuals) for liaison with funding agencies and State and Federal representatives. Consider at least a once-yearly trip to Raleigh and Washington to meet with your representatives.  
*Timeline:* Begin as soon as plan is adopted and implementation projects are defined; re-contact at appropriate intervals, **ongoing.**  
*Responsibility:* Council, City Manager, Advisory Committee.
- **Define Intermediate and Long-Term Goals and Funding Sources.** Begin in the first few months after adoption of the plan to prioritize mid-term and long-term projects (streetscape implementation, economic development) and define potential funding sources. Find possible sources of assistance with grant writing, including knowledgeable local citizens, agencies and consultants who can take major responsibility for spearheading different grants, loans, or other funding mechanisms.

**Timeline:** will depend on potential sources of income, proposal deadlines, and priority of projects, **ongoing**.

**Responsibility:** City Manager and staff with assistance from Agencies, consultants, and knowledgeable citizens and groups.

- **Community Outreach, Communications.** Begin immediately to keep the public informed about progress toward your goals. Consider the best ways to publicize your success: social media, website, press releases, events. Make sure to include funding agencies and elected officials in all communications.  
**Timeline:** begin immediately, **ongoing**.  
**Responsibility:** Advisory Committee or interested individual or group.

## Intermediate Tasks/Projects (6 months to 18 months)

- **Implement First Projects.** Implement the first project (see Short-Term project section at left). After some smaller projects are in process or complete, implement at least a portion of streetscape improvements (probably on Clay Street), because without this commitment, outside funding will be more difficult to obtain. Because of the railroad and overhead lines, there may be inclination from funding agencies to assist with these challenges in order to improve safety and increase the opportunities for new development.  
**Timeline:** as soon as possible after funding has been secured.  
**Responsibility:** City Manager and Council with support from Advisory Committee.
- **Seek/Identify Funding for Additional Streetscape Implementation Projects.** As soon as the first project is heading towards

implementation, begin seeking outside funding for additional improvements. Most will require some proportion of local matching funds, so plan for this. If the BUILD program is still in place, this would be the time to apply for it. The City could apply in 2019, and if unsuccessful, could reapply in 2020.

**Timeline:** As soon as the first project is moving toward implementation, during implementation, or immediately afterward; **ongoing**.

**Responsibility:** City Manager, Council, with Agency assistance or private consultants.

- **Identify and Assist Key Properties for Redevelopment.** Keep informed about the status of properties and individuals or groups that may be interested in redeveloping properties downtown. If there is interest in key properties, consider what incentives might be necessary to ensure appropriate redevelopment. Examples of assistance might include building nearby sidewalks, providing connections for street-side utilities and obtaining grants for building upgrades. Ensure adherence to Design Standards established with the Overlay District.  
**Timeline:** as opportunities arise, **ongoing**.  
**Responsibility:** City Manager and Council, Advisory Committee, and Agency, property owner or consultant assistance with grants.
- **Expand Bike Paths and Lanes.** Expand bike/pedestrian paths as outlined in the Bike/Ped Plan. Explore ways to expand the bike paths around Mebane and from Mebane to other communities and destinations.  
**Timeline:** **ongoing**.  
**Responsibility:** City, County, State and County Parks Departments, interested advocates.

- **Expand Areas of Continuous/Upgraded Sidewalks.** Expand continuous sidewalks as opportunities arise, in particular in conjunction with new development within the Overlay District. The City already has this policy, but emphasis on the downtown study area would help to improve walkability ahead of development. The goal should be continuous sidewalks with handicap access throughout the district and connecting to the neighborhoods.

**Timeline:** **ongoing**.

**Responsibility:** City Manager and Council.

## Long-Term Tasks

Long-term tasks include all the previous tasks that include the Timeline designation of “**ongoing**.” This includes:

- Maintain Advisory and Design Committees (these tasks will fall under the umbrella of the Main Street program once in place);
- Identify Funding Sources;
- Ongoing advocacy with agencies, elected representatives;
- Ongoing implementation of streetscapes in the expanded historic core area and along Center Street and Washington Streets;
- Implement continuous sidewalks and street trees throughout the study area;
- Refine ongoing goals;
- Community outreach and communications;
- Implement and expand bike infrastructure;
- Assist/encourage property owners with appropriate redevelopment.



## 5.1 Mebane's Future & Impacts of the Vision Plan

Mebane already has a growing, young population, a healthy economy, and an interesting and historic downtown. At the present time, many people outside the area know Mebane primarily for the successful Tanger Outlets that they pass by on Interstate 40, but Mebane is much more than this. The City has shown great forethought in planning efforts in the recent past and for undertaking this study to improve and expand the downtown and raise recognition for the community and the downtown area.

This plan, which was created with input from all interested parties in Mebane, seeks to create a more dense, attractive and walkable downtown. This will in turn attract further growth and investment and create a much more rounded and exciting character for the community regionally and statewide. All the pieces are in place to make this goal a reality as long as stakeholders, staff, Council and the public believes in Mebane's potential and works steadily over time to make it a reality.

As Mebane's population has doubled since the year 2000, the city's downtown area has seen little expansion. Other than the addition of residential apartments at The Lofts at White Furniture and Mebane Mill Lofts, the capacity to add new businesses and new residents is much the same as it was decades ago. A carefully-planned expansion of downtown's footprint and uses over the next 10 years or more, while retaining much of the same character, would allow downtown to compliment the entire city's growth and keep it as a center of community activity.

The Vision Plan illustrates the potential for nearly 850,000 square feet of new residential and commercial uses. Using modest estimates, this sce-

nario could provide space for 1,200 new residents and jobs for 600 employees. Total new investment in the downtown area could be in excess of \$90 million. At present tax rates, over a 10-year period of gradual investment the City of Mebane would realize over \$2.6 million in additional property tax revenues, while the city and county would see a combined revenue increase of nearly \$6 million.

More importantly, an increasingly vibrant downtown would enhance Mebane's reputation as a great small city on the western edge of the Research Triangle region. In the past, while Mebane has attracted new warehouse, distribution, and industrial investment, it has missed out on the higher-wage office and headquarters jobs those companies could bring. Many of those jobs have ended up in downtown Durham or Chapel Hill, where new and renovated office buildings, restaurant and nightlife options, apartments and condominiums create an energetic atmosphere. New investments in downtown Mebane could bring the opportunity to land those higher-level jobs and make Mebane an even more attractive destination for talented people and innovative businesses.

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