



# 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.

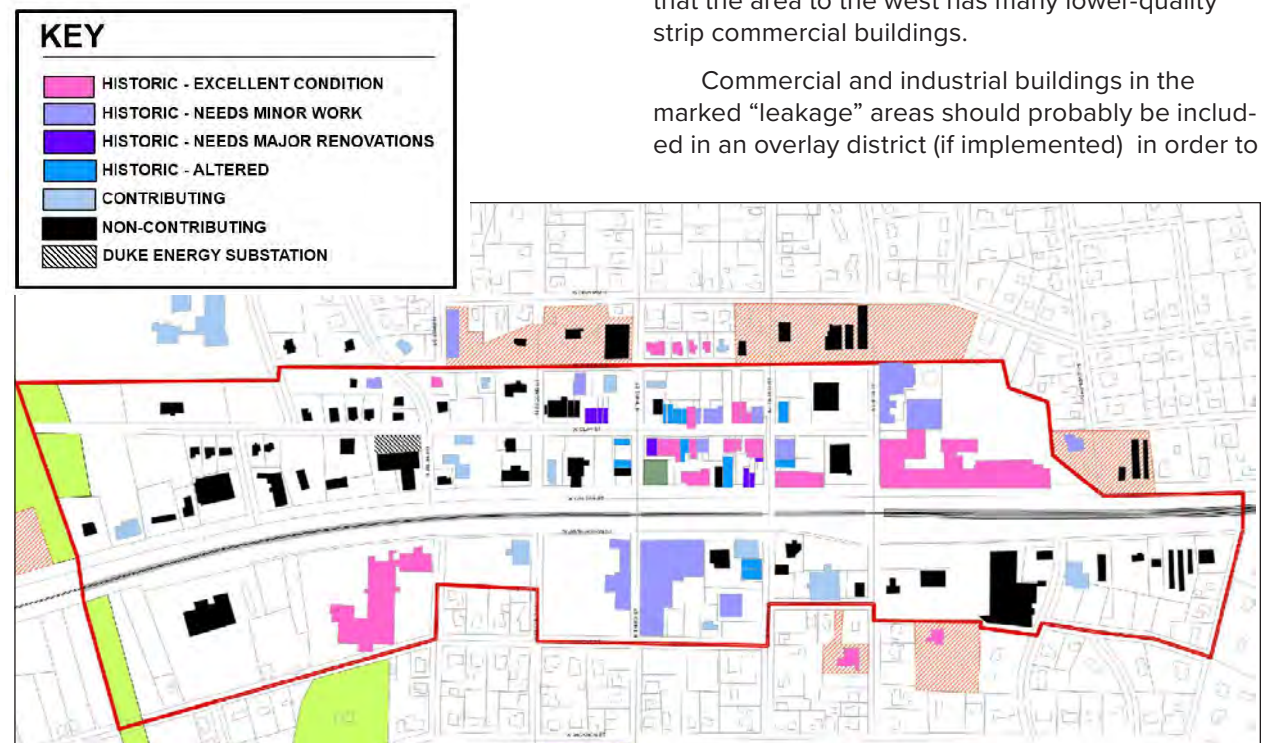
To ensure the Downtown and the park create synergy, it will be important to create stronger and more attractive connections between the two. Clay Street and Center Street are the two existing connections.

### 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



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.

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

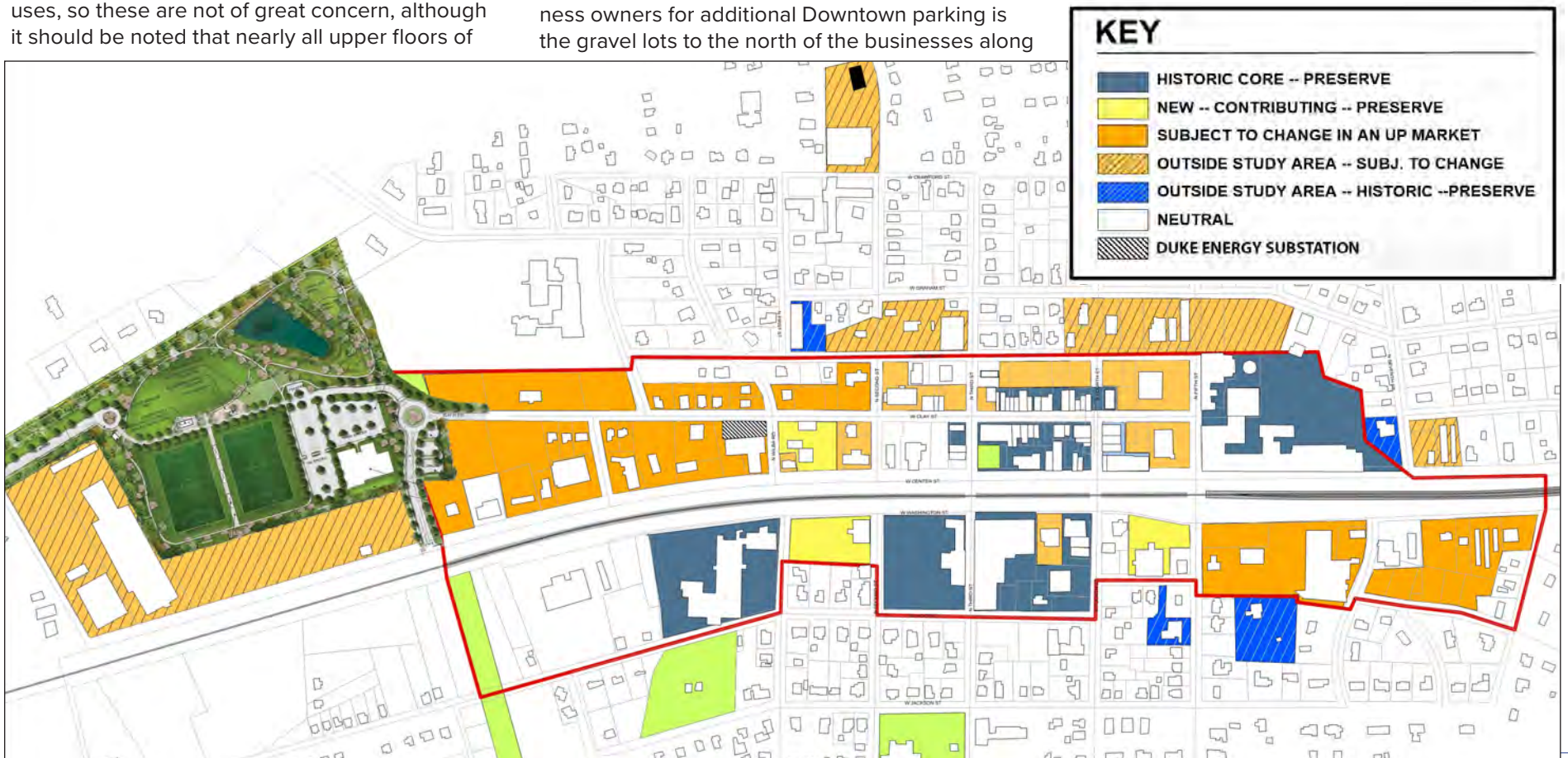
Downtown buildings are vacant, so these represent opportunities for new residential or office uses.

### 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.



**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.

### 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.

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

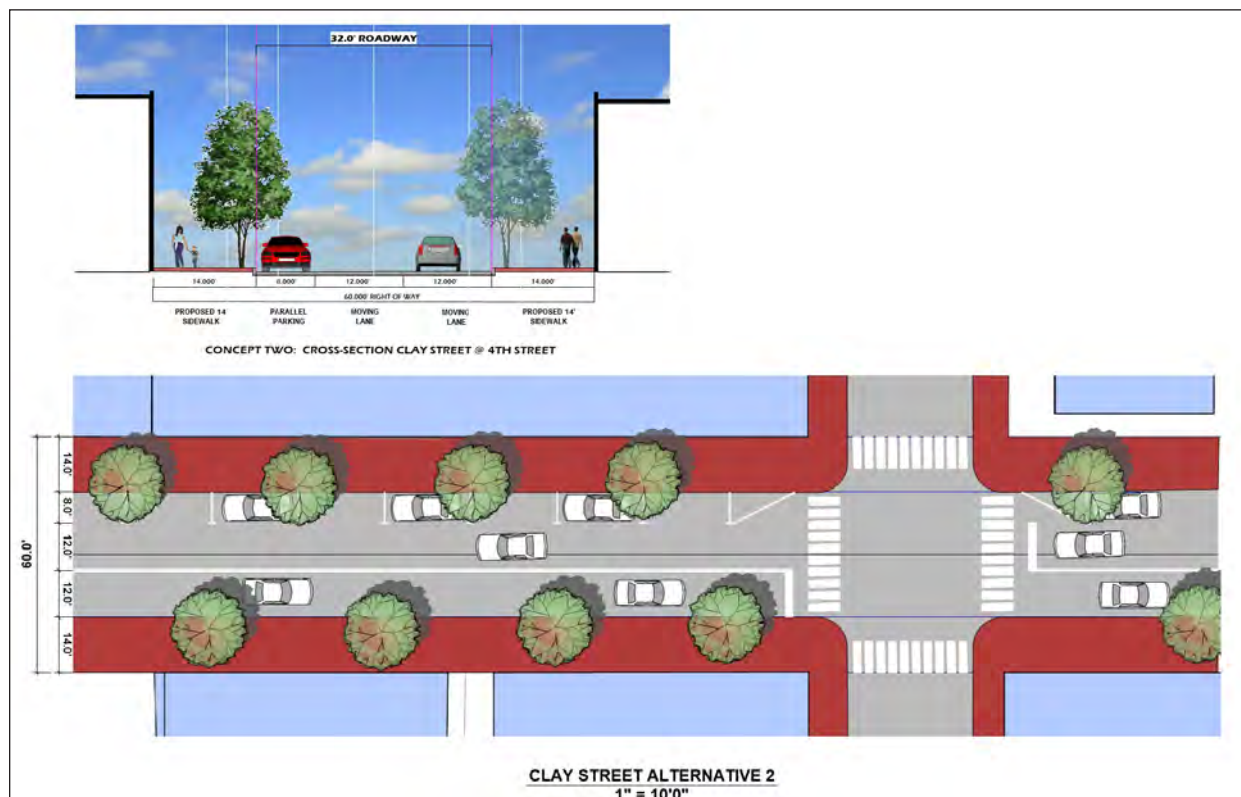
two 12' moving lanes, one 8' parking lane, and two 14' sidewalks. Fourteen feet is adequate for street trees and site furniture (benches, trash receptacles, bike racks etc.), space for two people to move along the sidewalk, and space for sidewalk dining at least two compact tables wide. If a cost-effective 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 an 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.

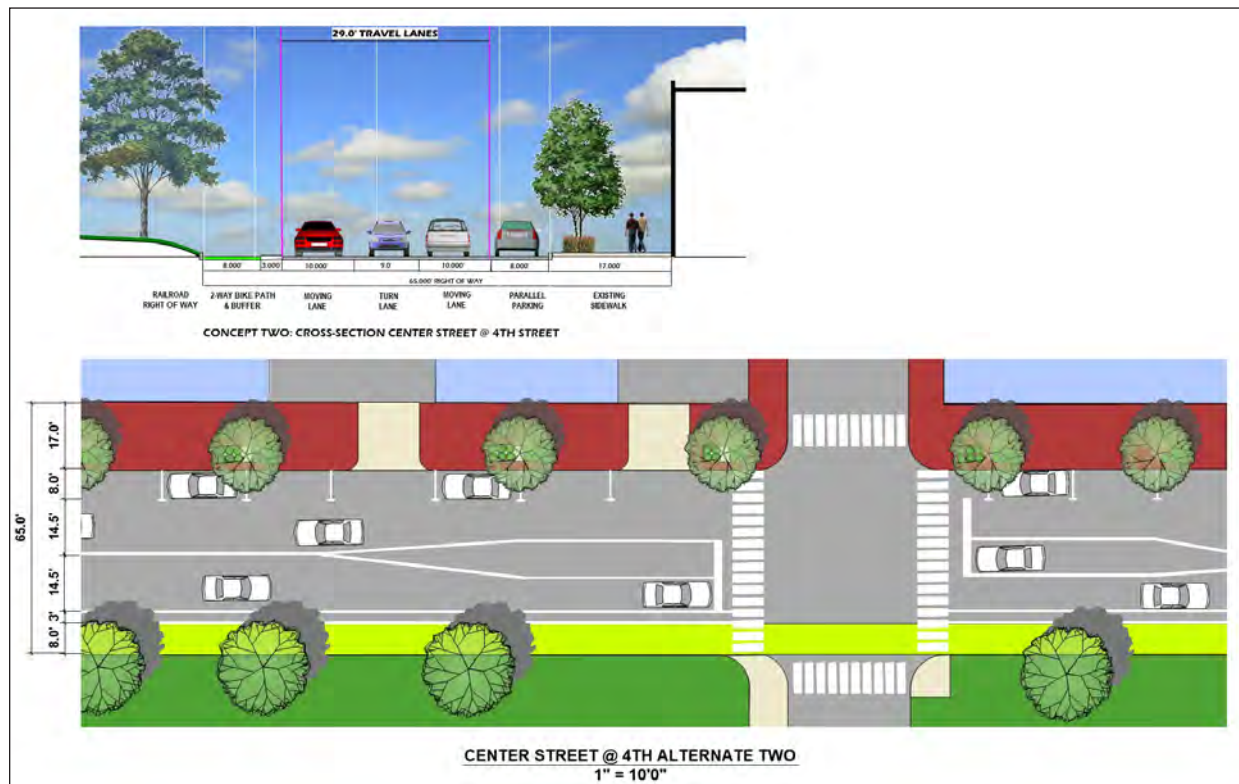
### Connecting Streets & Railroad Crossings

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.

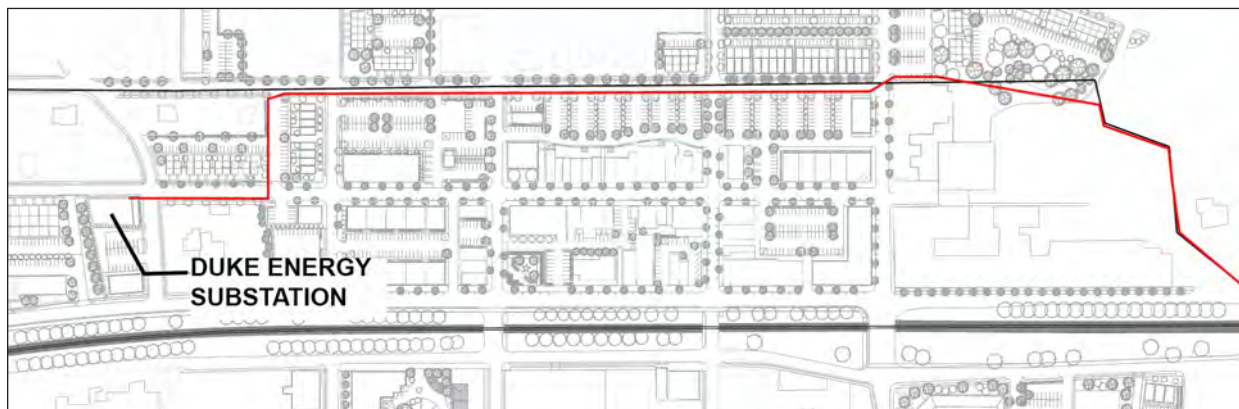
At a minimum, the sidewalks along Third through Fifth between Clay and Center Streets should be improved to connect these two important streets.

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.

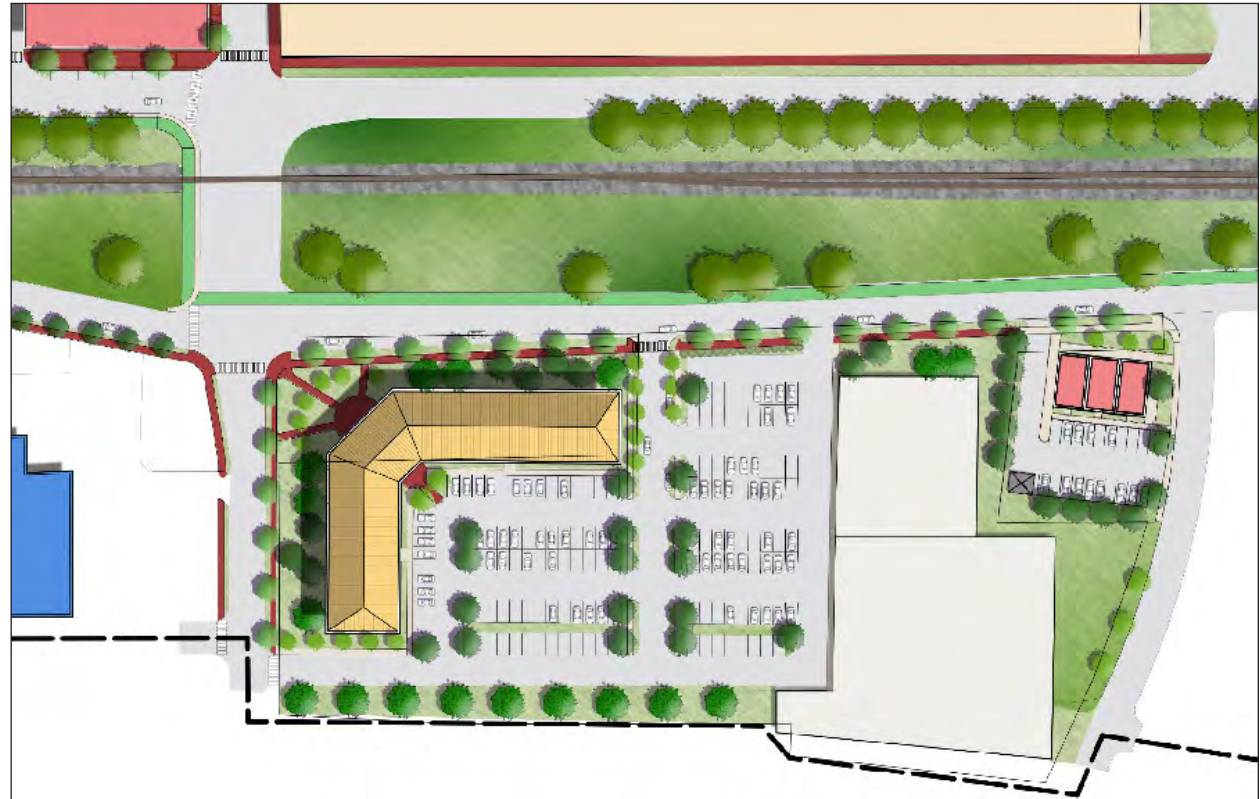


### Development South of Washington Street -- Shopping Center Site

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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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY PROFILE

## 1.1 Introduction

### Purpose

The City, when requesting proposals to develop a small area plan for the downtown district, stated the purpose of the plan as follows:

*The City of Mebane is a quickly-growing (>4% annually) city of about 14,000 people located just off Interstate-40/85 in Alamance County, midway between the Triangle and Triad economic development regions. The Downtown District is the 81-acre cultural and commercial center of the City, [and] an active hub of local commerce and recreation. It is anchored on the east by a recently-renovated furniture factory that now hosts over 150 loft apartments, and, at the west, by a 32-acre city park that will host soccer fields, a splash area, playgrounds, and an open recreation lawn when it opens in Summer 2018.*

*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.

Our goals for the plan as quoted from our proposal were as follows:

*Mebane's downtown has many attractive historic buildings and small businesses, and in recent years the City has successfully planned for increases in population, improved transportation, and improved*

*bike and pedestrian safety and access. The project with Rehab Builders (The Lofts at White Furniture) is bringing new residents to the downtown. The elements that still need attention include the public environment in the downtown and improvements to the urban fabric, both in the historic downtown (parking, gaps, underutilized buildings) and around the edges of the downtown as they connect to surrounding neighborhoods and uses (suburban buildings and site planning, non-historic materials, gaps, vacant and underutilized buildings and properties).*

*Our approach to a Vision Plan for downtown Mebane includes 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. 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.*

The plan as set forth in this report assesses current demographics in this section and addresses existing physical conditions in Section 2:Analysis. Based on analysis, Section 3 outlines approaches to "building upon the Downtown District's assets and resolving its liabilities" through use of an overlay district for the downtown area and that would provide guidelines to ensure high quality development and complementary public improvements that will encourage investment and raise the profile of the downtown both within the community and in the region and the state.



**Mebane Downtown Vision Plan.** Explanations of all the elements of the plan can be found in Sections 3 and 4 of this document.



Section 4 presents the plan drawing and smaller sections of the plan that reviews and explains it block by block, showing public improvements and opportunities for private development. It is important to remember while reading this section that Vision Plans (master plans) imagine what the City could look like over a horizon of approximately ten years or more. The new buildings shown are not literal interpretations of what will exist in that location in the future, but rather show appropriate building types and site planning that will provide greater density to the downtown to make it more attractive and more walkable in the future.

Section 5 presents and implementation strategy for making the vision a reality over time. An attractive plan is only the start of the process. The plan must be adopted by Council and approved by stakeholders (citizens, property owners, merchants). The City must take the lead in beginning to implement public improvements as a way to demonstrate commitment to the plan. This commitment and leadership over time will help the City to obtain investment, grants, loans, new businesses and residents, and a higher profile for the community.

The appendices present costs for initial recommended public improvements and also present the economic analysis of several key projects identified in the plan.

## Community Facts

Mebane is a community located primarily in Alamance County and partly in Orange County. The community is named for Alexander Mebane, an American Revolutionary War general and member of the U.S. Congress, and was incorporated in 1881. As of 2016 the population was a little over 14,000. Just since 2010, Mebane's population has increased by 31.4 percent, compared with a 7.5 percent gain across Alamance County and a 7.7 percent increase in all of North Carolina.



*Clay Street, Mebane in the early 1900's. This hand-colored postcard shows a view that is nearly identical to the present day view.*

The first industry in Mebane was the White Furniture Company established in 1881, followed by the Mebane Bedding Company (now Kingsdown) in 1904. Relevant to the downtown, the first streets and sidewalks were created in 1922.

The downtown was busy and successful almost from the beginning. Mebane was known for having everything you might need available downtown: clothing, supplies, services, groceries, restaurants, pharmacies. If you needed it, it was available in downtown. This “can do” attitude has survived today, and although the downtown has a more modern mix of downtown uses today, it includes a

lively mix of shops, restaurants, and services that makes it a much-beloved center and historic icon for the community.

## 1.2 Demographics & Economic Profile, 2018

Prepared by Greg Payne of Economic Leadership, LLC

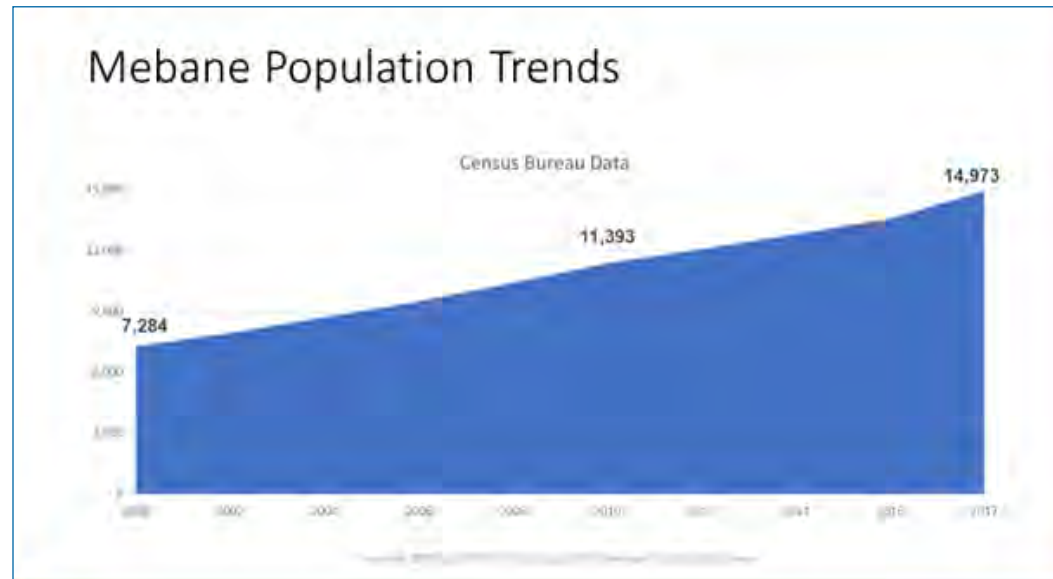
This overview provides background information for the Downtown Master Plan, with indicators that illustrate the health of the Mebane community, both city-wide and downtown. The trends indicated here can help point to the best target demographic markets for downtown Mebane, and to possible new development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

### Population

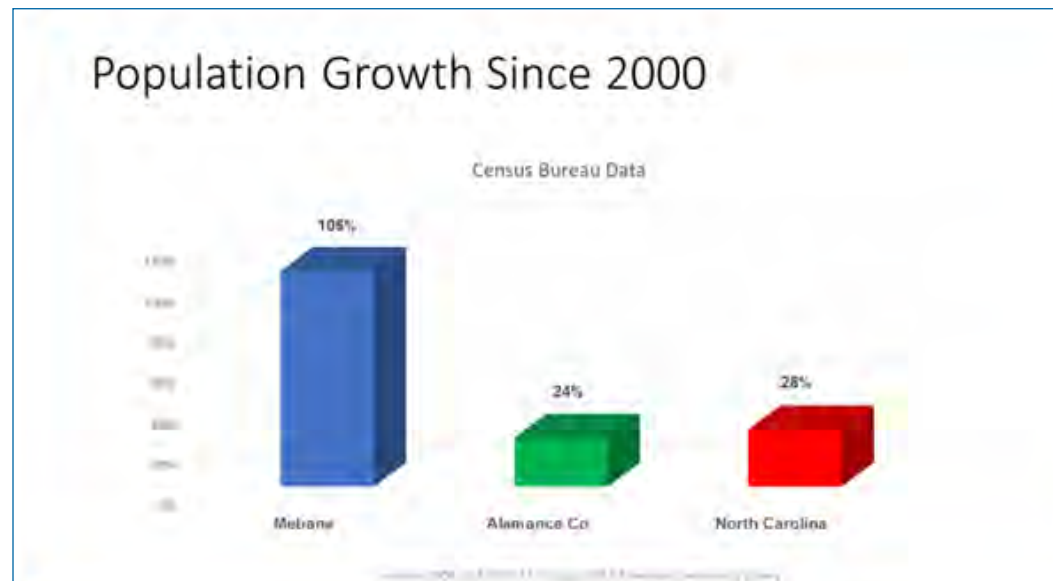
Strategically located on the western edge of the Research Triangle metropolitan region and the eastern edge of the Piedmont Triad region, the City of Mebane has grown rapidly in recent decades.

Mebane’s population gains have been much more dramatic than those in Alamance County overall and across the state of North Carolina.

Just since 2010, Mebane’s population has increased by 31.4 percent, compared with a 7.5 percent gain across Alamance County and a 7.7 percent increase in all of North Carolina.



*Mebane’s population gains have been much more dramatic than those in Alamance County overall and across the state of North Carolina.*



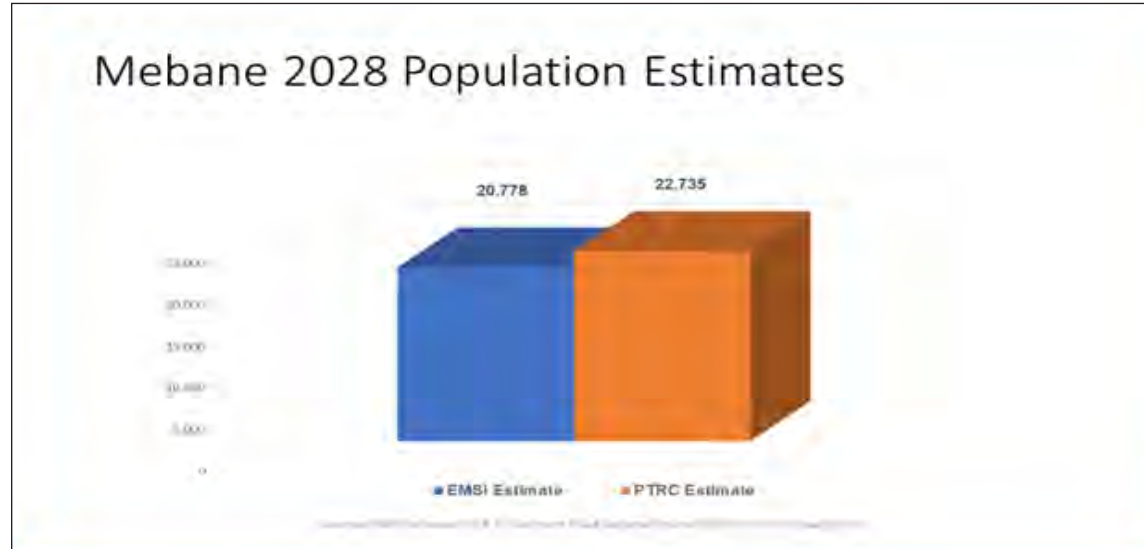
*Just since 2010, Mebane’s population has increased by 31.4 percent, compared with a 7.5 percent gain across Alamance County and a 7.7 percent increase in all of North Carolina.*



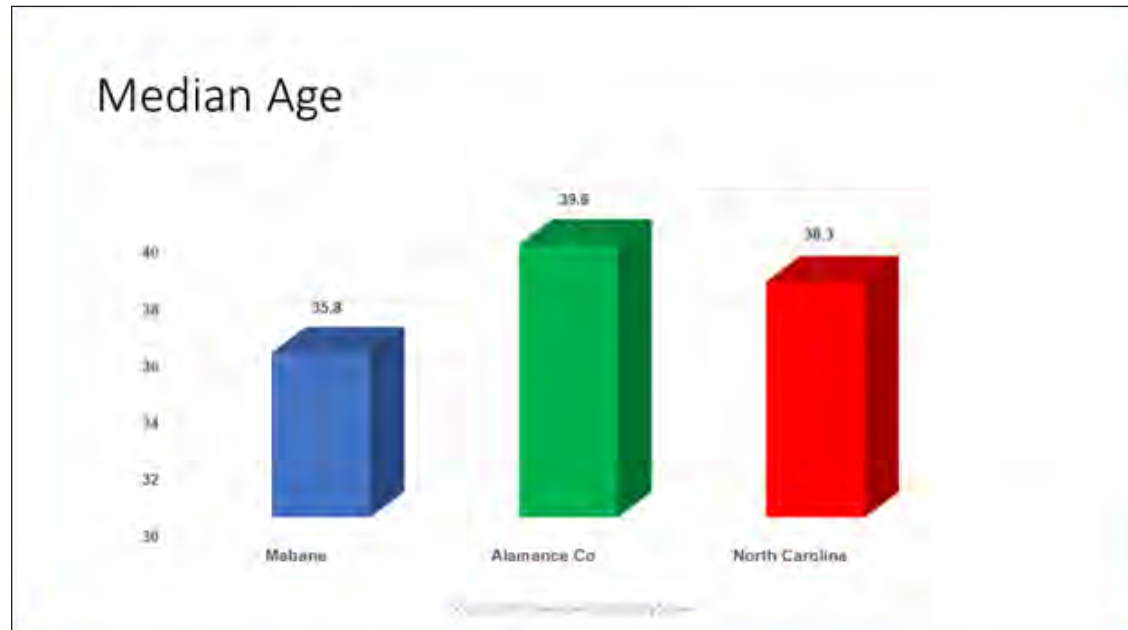
Population projections are not always accurate, but various sources point to significant gains continuing for Mebane over the next ten years.

**Makeup of the Population**

Recent Census Bureau data shows Mebane to have a significantly younger population than the county and state, and with a greater percentage of families with children at home.

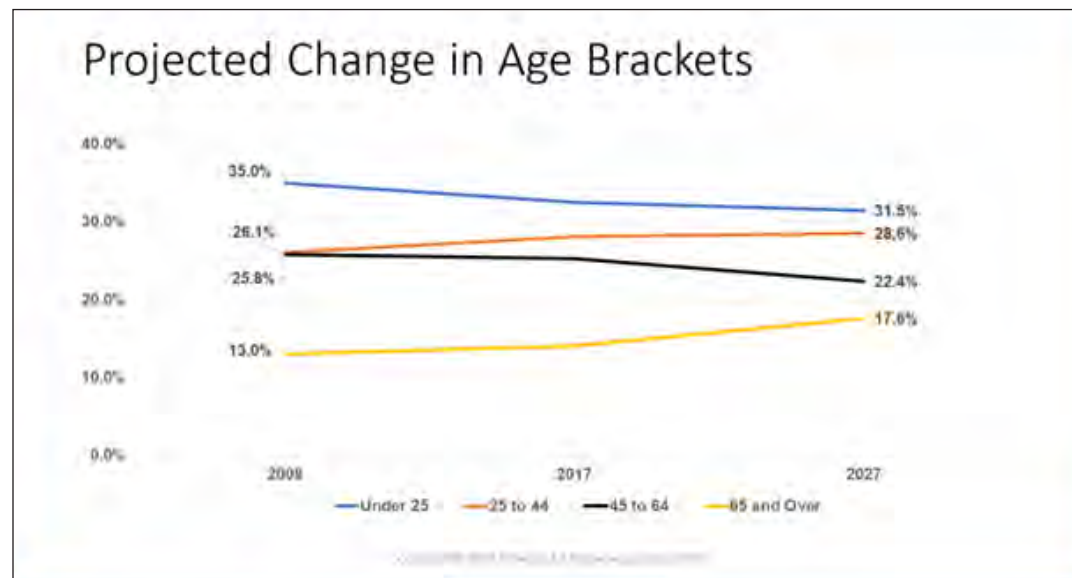
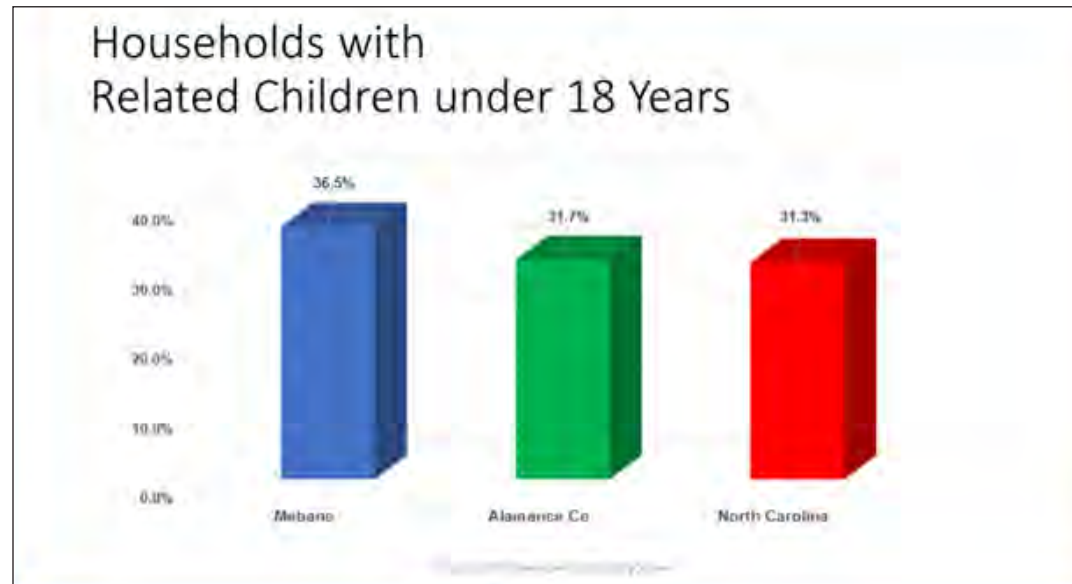


*Population projections are not always accurate, but various sources point to significant gains continuing for Mebane over the next ten years.*



*Recent Census Bureau data shows Mebane to have a significantly younger population than the county and state, and with a greater percentage of families with children at home.*

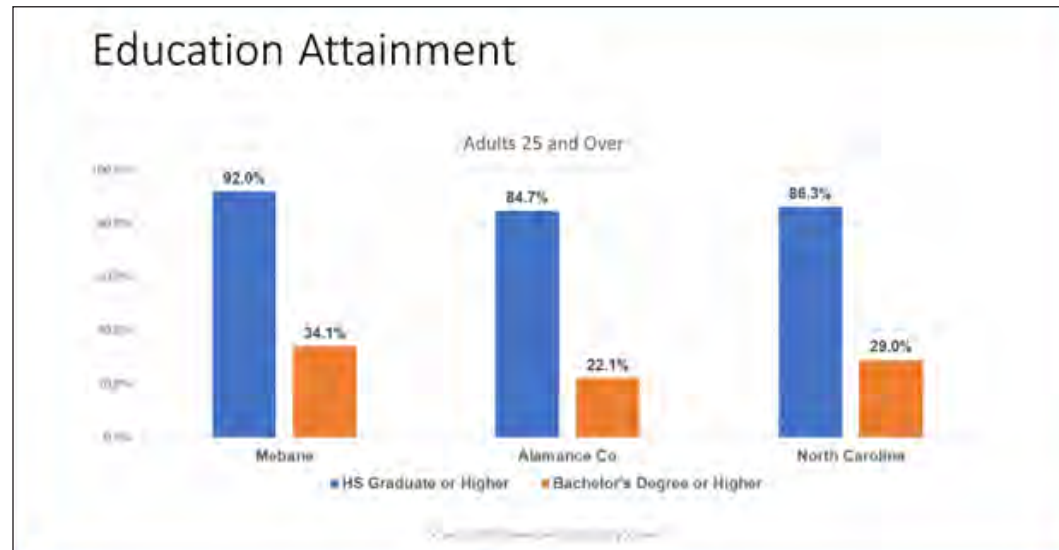
In the coming years, Mebane’s share of population in the oldest age bracket is projected to increase, in keeping with national trends. However, the percentage of people in the prime working-age bracket, those aged 25 to 44, is also projected to increase. In a time when many communities are struggling with a declining working-age population, this is a positive trend for Mebane.



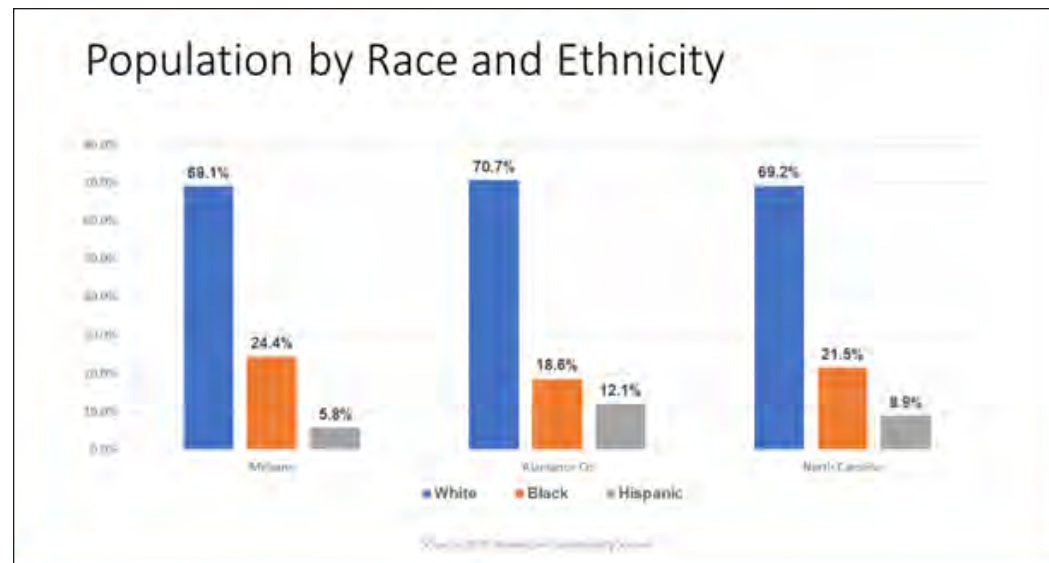


Mebane’s adult population has significantly higher education attainment (high school and college graduates), as shown by the chart at top right.

The population makeup by race and ethnicity in Mebane is similar to that of the county and state, although Mebane has a somewhat higher percentage of Black or African-American residents and a smaller percentage of Hispanic residents.



Mebane’s adult population has significantly higher education attainment (high school and college graduates), as shown by the chart above.

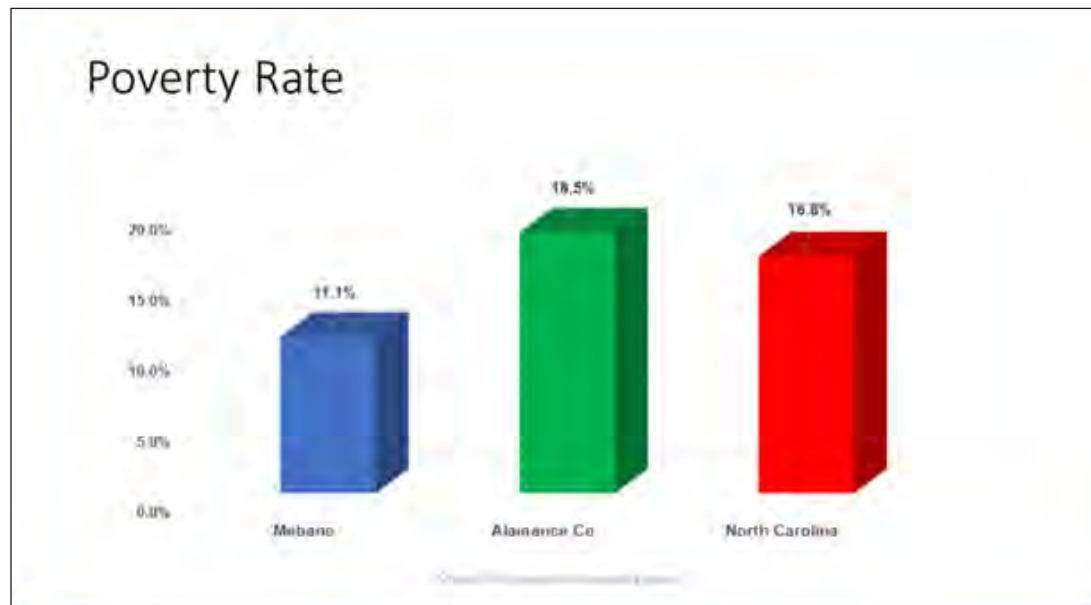


The population makeup by race and ethnicity in Mebane is similar to that of the county and state, although Mebane has a somewhat higher percentage of Black or African-American residents and a smaller percentage of Hispanic residents.

### Income and Poverty

The numbers show Mebane to have a relatively affluent population, with incomes significantly higher than Alamance County and North Carolina.

Accordingly, Mebane's poverty rate is much lower than that of the county and state.

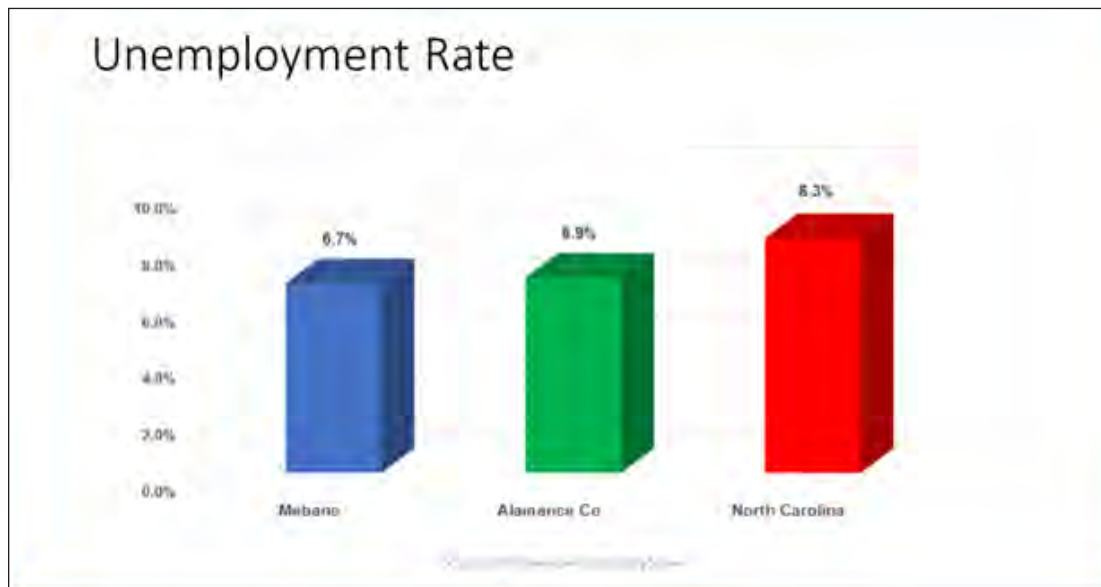




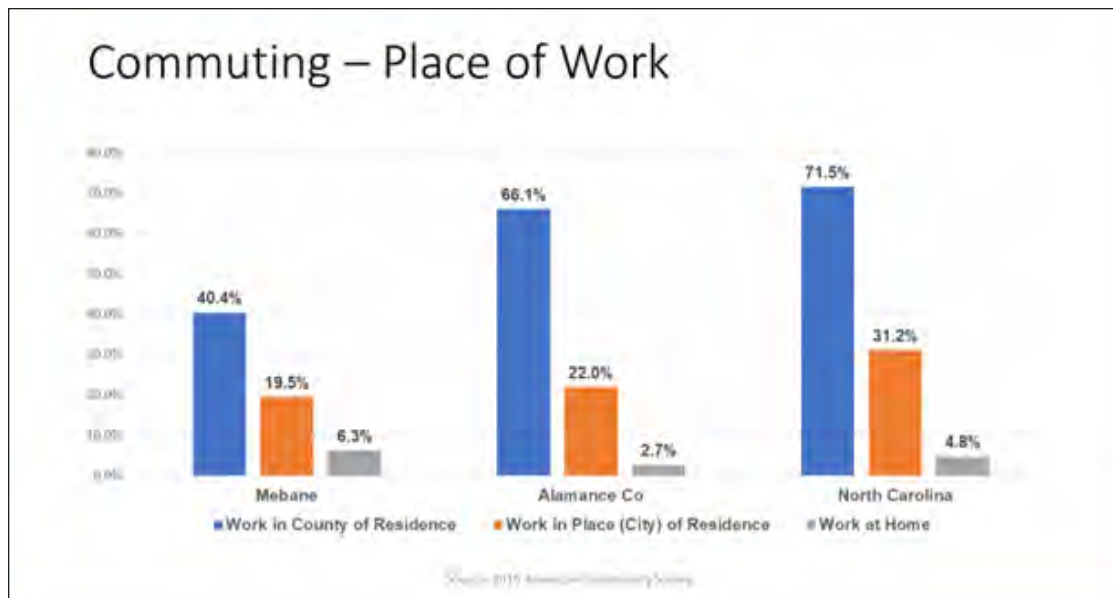
### Work and Commuting

Mebane residents have a lower unemployment rate than the overall rates for Alamance County and North Carolina. The figures at right are relatively old (rates have continued to drop in the county and state), but unemployment is not frequently calculated for individual cities.

Mebane does have a strikingly high rate of out-commuting for work. In North Carolina, nearly 72 percent of residents work somewhere within the same county where they live. Only 40 percent of Mebane residents work in Mebane or anywhere else in their county of residence. The average commuting time for Mebane residents is slightly higher than average.



Mebane residents have a lower unemployment rate than the overall rates for Alamance County and North Carolina.



Mebane has a strikingly high rate of out-commuting for work.

## Summary Conclusions for Mebane's Demographic and Economic Data

The figures above 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 commuting 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.***

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*The average commuting time for Mebane residents is slightly higher than average*



# 2.0 ANALYSIS

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

## 2.1 Study Area and Leakage

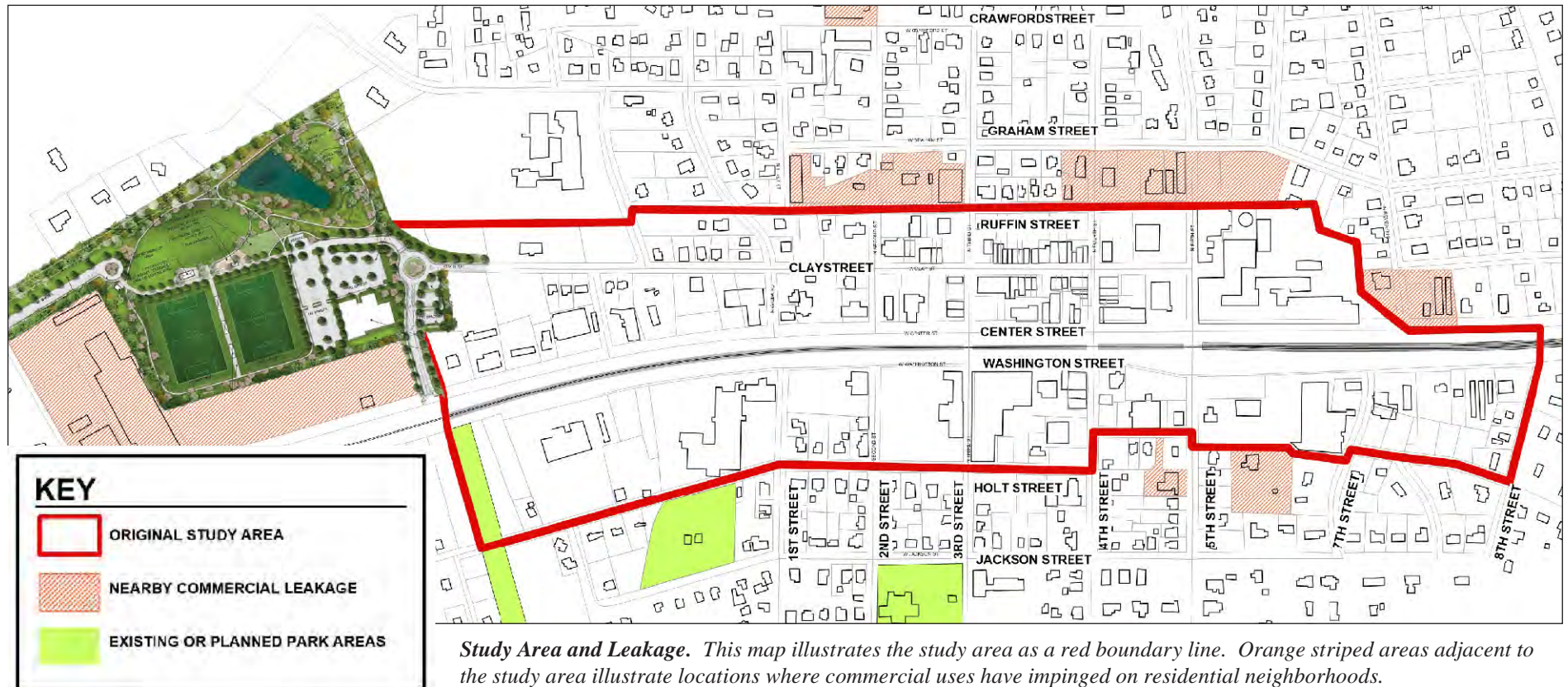
The Study area is shown on the drawing below outlined in red. The area is about 117 acres, and it contains a substantial group of attractive historic buildings on the east end including the White Furniture Building (recently rehabbed for residential), and the historic commercial core of the downtown. 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 around the study area are neighborhood residential. Also shown on the drawing are areas striped in orange, which illustrate nearby uses other than residential that have appeared in the neighborhoods over time. One of the goals of the plan will be to recommend an overlay district for the entire study area in order to have

a unified set of zoning, appearance and development standards. This could be accomplished via an overlay district and form-based code. This will help to make the area more consistent in appearance and more attractive to development. With this in mind, consideration needs to be given to these “outlier” uses. Should they be incorporated into this potential overlay district to ensure orderly growth of the downtown commercial district, or should they be confined to future uses compatible to the surrounding residential?

The properties to the south and west of the new park are also included because this is a major



gateway to the downtown from the west, and because the properties to the south in particular, depending on how they are developed, can negatively or positively impact the perception of the park and the downtown.

## 2.2 Circulation/Destination

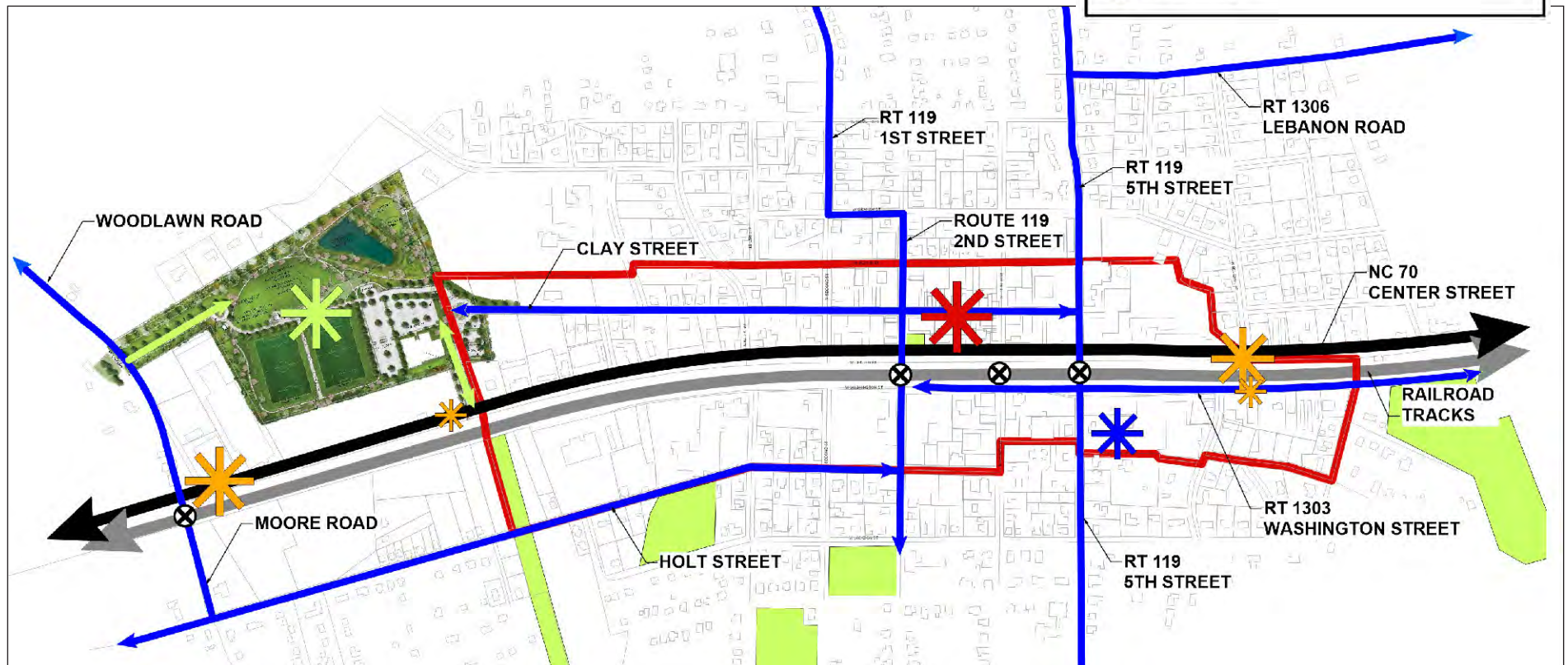
The most notable issues with Circulation in and around the study area are the railroad tracks and the traffic on Center Street, including significant truck traffic. There have already been excellent studies completed including a new Comprehensive Transportation Plan and a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. 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 Fifth 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. Among the recommendations is a plan to erect a steel or aluminum picket fence along the tracks in the downtown to prevent pedestrians from crossing the tracks away from signalized intersections. After first recommending that the fence be located near the road, discussions with the City have led to the possibility of locating the fence somewhat closer to the tracks.

*Circulation/Destinations.* Except for Route 70 (Center Street), there are no East-West thoroughfares in the study area. Fifth Street is the main North-South connector. The Railroad crossings restrict North-South movement both physically and psychologically.

KEY	
	PRIMARY ROUTE / TRUCKS
	TRAIN TRACKS / BARRIER
	SECONDARY ROUTE
	PRIMARY (LG) & SECONDARY (SM) POTENTIAL GATEWAYS
	HISTORIC DOWNTOWN CORE
	PARK DESTINATION
	CITY GOVERNMENT
	RR CROSSING







(Top): view of the Railroad tracks looking east on Washington. Attractive landscaping helps to soften views to the tracks. The railroad crossing at 3rd Street (lower photo) combined with the many overhead utility lines illustrates the challenge of unifying the north and south side of the tracks and lessening their impact.

Aside from Center Street/Route 70, 5th Street is a major route into the downtown from the south. Other than that, connections to through roads going in various directions are not obvious (see blue lines in *Circulation* Drawing, previous page), making it important that the downtown itself becomes the destination from many directions.

The other important destinations downtown include City Hall, the Library, and the historic commercial area itself. In the future, the planned park at the west end of the study area will become an important destination. 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 appearance of Center Street should be improved, continuous sidewalks on western Center Street, and bike lanes or bike share signage should be installed. Clay Street offers a quieter connection for pedestrians and bicycles, but the narrowness of the ROW as the road nears the park needs to be addressed.

Gateways into the downtown should also be considered. The asterisks on the *Circulation/Destination* drawing illustrate some possible locations for gateway treatments. These can be as simple as signage or may involve walls, landscaping and other elements if space allows. Such markers aid the first-time visitor in finding the downtown, and should be augmented by additional wayfinding signage that directs motorists to downtown destinations, parking, and events (and any special event parking) when these occur.

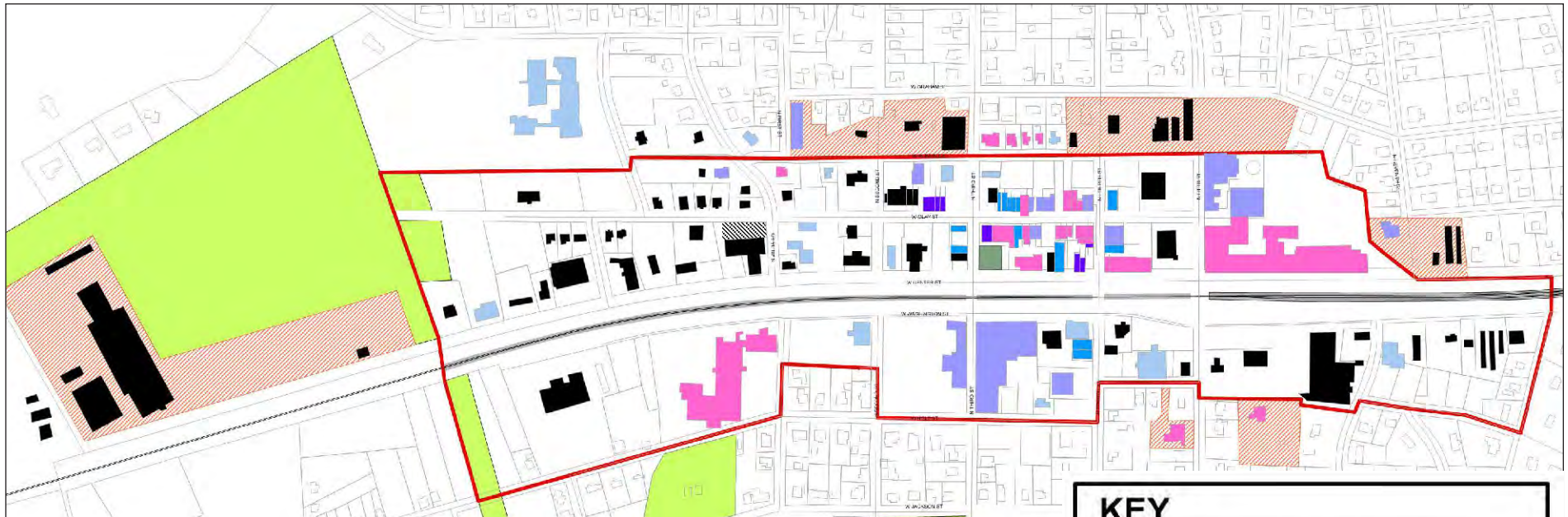
### 2.3 Architectural Quality

Architectural Quality is an important indicator of the success of a downtown area. 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.



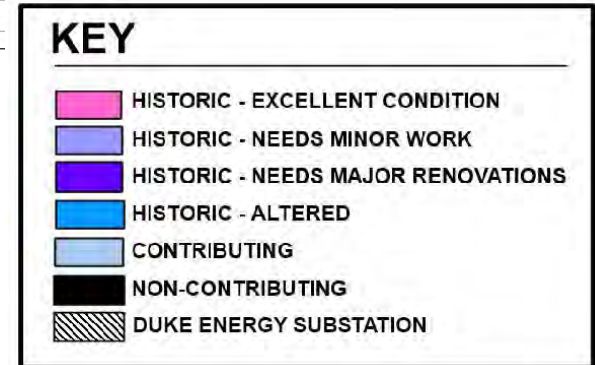
A few of the many attractive buildings in the historic core area. The Lofts at White Furniture building on Fifth and Washington is at the top; the restored Five Star Building on Washington is in the middle; and the Reed's Coffee House building on Clay is above.





The above *Architectural Quality* drawings illustrates architectural quality. Bright pink indicates buildings that have been rehabilitated and are in good condition. Violet indicates buildings that appear to be in structurally sound but need rehabilitation. Purple buildings are historic, but are in a deteriorated condition. Light blue buildings indicate new buildings that contribute to the historic context. Black buildings are those that do not contribute to the historic context of the downtown.

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 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 low-quality strip commercial buildings that (with a few exceptions) add little to the character of the downtown.



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.

The photo at left (top) shows the character of the commercial buildings along the western section of Center Street (Route 70). This is not the best gateway to the historic downtown. The photo at the lower right shows a new funeral home on Center that contributes to the desired high-quality image of Mebane’s downtown.





**KEY**

- 100% OCCUPIED
- PARTIALLY OCCUPIED
- 100% VACANT
- VACANT, DETERIORATED
- DUKE ENERGY SUBSTATION

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.

### 2.4 Building Occupancy

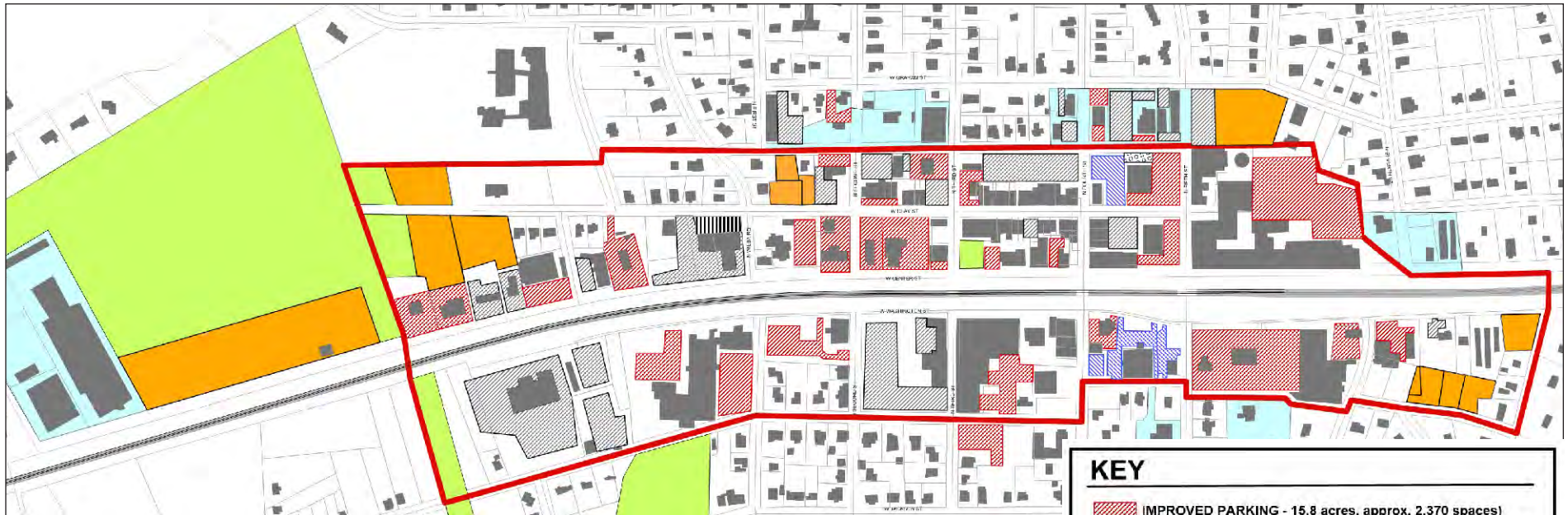
Examination of the *Building Occupancy* drawing above shows that the majority of buildings in the study area are occupied. Not all the buildings, or the uses, are “highest and best,” but the occupancy levels suggest a very robust economy. Vacant or partially vacant buildings include one portion of the White Furniture complex which has not yet been redeveloped but probably will be at some point, and three of the historic Kingsdown buildings. First floor vacancies in the historic core area are quickly reoccupied, 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. There were discussions during the plan process about the high cost of converting upper floors for residential, which is due to state fire codes. However, such authentic spaces in historic buildings are in high demand in many cities. Goldsboro is a good example of this; upper floor conversions are commanding excellent



The above drawing shows *Building Occupancy* in the study area, with conditions as shown in the key, above. Many of the buildings shown in red are owned and maintained and awaiting redevelopment rather than being derelict. An example is the building shown in the photo at left. The single story portion is rented, and the two story section is vacant, but the owner is considering options for redevelopment. This points to a very strong economy in Mebane at the present time.





**Parking and Vacant Land.** This drawing shows current paved parking, public parking, and existing “informal” (unimproved) parking in the study area. The scale of the map does not allow representation of on-street parking.

rents and have high occupancy, so conversions are increasing over time.

There is currently only one commercial building along the north side of Clay Street that has been vacant for some time (Karma Cafe). This may represent a redevelopment opportunity in the future, especially given that this intersection could be a major gateway to the downtown from the west.

Another potential opportunity could be in the “leakage” area to the south and west of the planned park. A building on the NE corner of Woodlawn and Center (US 70) is vacant, and the entire area to the south of the park east of the storage facility is also vacant. As mentioned above, the appropriate development of this property will be important to the perception/entry to the park and the downtown.

## 2.5 Parking and Vacant Land

Planning for growth must include planning for adequate parking. Usually the problem is not that there is inadequate parking, but that the parking is private and reserved at all times (even when unused), or is perceived as being too far to walk. The drawing above illustrates the amount of improved (paved) parking, unimproved (unpaved) parking, public parking and vacant land in the study area and nearby leakage areas.

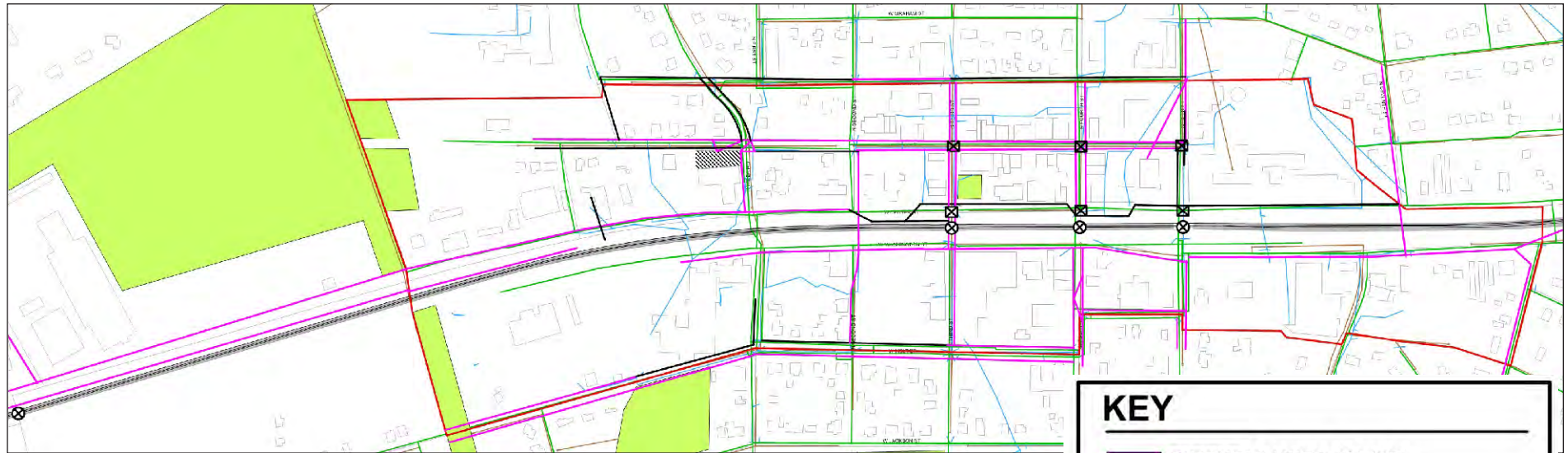
The standard for parking spaces per acre is 170, but allowing for driveways and screening, we have used 150 spaces per acre as a conservative estimate. The key for this drawing reveals that there are over 4,000 existing or potential parking spaces within the study area. The key to providing enough parking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

provement of gravel parking lots, especially in the historic core area.

This drawing also shows vacant land, and it is notable that there are less than 7 acres that are vacant (plus 5.9 additional acres if the leakage areas are included in this calculation). Some of this could be used for parking, but in most cases it would probably be better used for a combination of new development and parking.

The primary focus of many historic core business owners for additional downtown parking is the gravel lots to the north of the businesses along Clay Street between 4th and 3rd Streets. There





**KEY**

- OVERHEAD LINES - MAJOR
- OVERHEAD LINES - MINOR
- WATER
- STORMWATER
- SEWER
- X SIGNALIZED INTERSECTION
- X RAILROAD CROSSING / EQUIPMENT

are several owners of these properties and it will probably require City initiative and investment to accomplish improvements to this area for parking. This will be explored further during concept and plan development.

Another way to address parking moving forward is to examine the current parking requirements and if necessary to lower them. Parking standards that work for suburban-style development are generally not relevant or advisable for denser urban settings. If an overlay district will be established, implementation would be straightforward. Many of the commercial strip uses on the west end of the downtown follow this suburban style of private parking, so hopefully as this area is redeveloped a different model can be used.

## 2.6 Infrastructure

The *Infrastructure* drawing above shows known underground and above ground infrastructure in the Downtown area. Overhead utility lines are shown in magenta. These are of most concern when considering improvements to the downtown

because they are so numerous and visually intrusive. In many cities overhead utilities are buried during street improvement projects, but in this case it is likely these lines will need to be rerouted rather than buried because of the potential costs. In the past the City has had discussions with Duke Energy about the overhead lines and the Duke Energy Substation at Wilba and Clay, but to date Duke Energy has not offered to move the substation or help with the cost of relocating the overhead lines.



*The above drawing shows Existing Infrastructure both above and below ground. When important downtown streets are upgraded it is usually advisable to upgrade aging systems including water, stormwater, and sewer. It makes little sense to upgrade the surface if improvements will have to be altered within a few years to replace old systems. The overhead lines will probably need to be moved rather than buried because of the cost.*

*The overhead lines on Clay Street (left) and some of the cross streets visually dominate the views and present a challenge to upgrading the environment on this important downtown street.*



This information will be useful for cost estimates and as the City considers public space improvements over time.

### 2.7 Summary Analysis

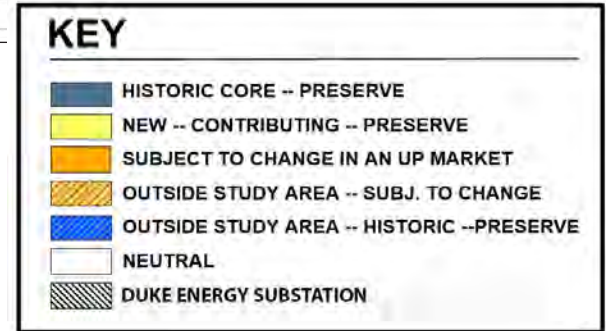
The Summary Analysis drawing above draws some conclusions that will shape decisions moving forward. These should be viewed with the understanding that changes in use / building type will only occur when there is a willing seller and buyer. That is, all uses are grandfathered as long as they are properly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

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). There are also a few properties adjacent to the study area (shown in blue with white hatching) that are historic, and these too should be preserved.

Buildings shown in yellow are new, but are significant contributors to the character of the study area, and should remain in place. Some are obvious choices, such as City Hall, and others are new commercial buildings that were designed and sited in a manner that complements the downtown (e.g. the funeral home on Center between 2nd and Wilba Road).

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.



The above drawing 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 uses and so are also subject to change (striped). The solid orange buildings were considered subject to change because they are commercial strip uses that are not pedestrian-friendly and because denser, more walkable 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.



Areas that have no designation are mostly neutral in terms of use and appearance. Some, like the metal building on the southwest corner of the study area, are non-contributing in terms of appearance, but are also viable businesses that are largely hidden from view. These could change if the property were key to the acquisition of land for new development, or could remain.

The drawing also shows the Duke Energy Substation on Clay just west of Wilba Road. This yard is a major negative influence on the appearance of Clay Street in this area, and because of its proximity to the ROW, is difficult if not impossible to screen entirely from view. More effective screening through solid fencing and/or landscaping will probably be the best solution. See Section 4 page 43 for more on this.

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*The above photo shows the electric substation at Wilba and Clay Streets. The fence on Clay Street is actually over the ROW, so it might be possible to move the fence back slightly and devise a way to screen it.*



## 3.0 CONCEPTS

### 3.1 Introduction

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 to accommodate future growth and expansion of offerings;
- Ensuring quality development;
- Improved signage and marketing to bring more people Downtown.

The Summary Analysis drawing at the end of section 2.0 provides the framework within which the concepts were developed.

### 3.2 Overlay District

It is the intention of the City to explore the creation of an overlay district 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 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.

Zoning codes generally only define uses, but the use of an overlay district can also define materials, mass, and form of the buildings and their relationship both to the site and to the street. This relationship of the building to the street is very important in creating a walkable, pedestrian-friendly Downtown area. Such codes address the public right of way in addition to site standards and building form. Street widths, sidewalk widths, on-street parking and even elements such as street trees and street furniture can also be defined.

The history of buildings in our country demonstrates that the uses of buildings can change over time but classic neighborhood and Downtown form is adaptable. Applying this adaptability to future buildings while demanding traditional development patterns and quality materials in Downtown Mebane will help ensure continued growth while maintaining and enhancing the image of the community.

*The diagram at right (from the DPZ website: [dpz.com/initiatives/Transect](http://dpz.com/initiatives/Transect)) illustrates the transition from rural landscapes to cities. The Mebane downtown would include categories T5, T4, and some T3 around the edges of the study area.*





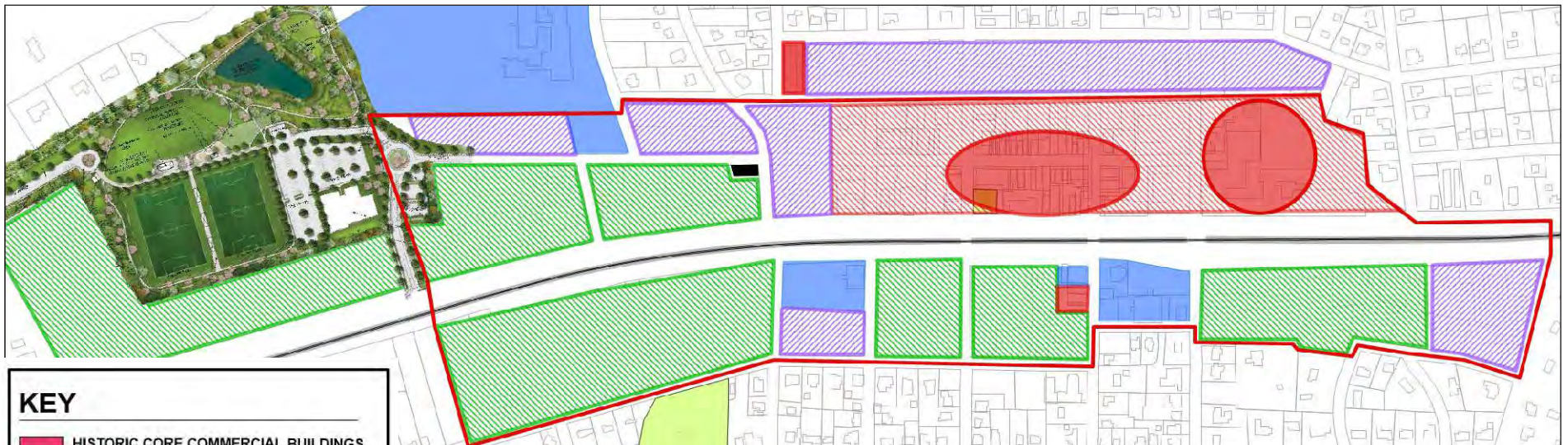
### 3.3 Building Form

Following from the idea discussed above about building types rather than uses, the drawing below demonstrates the different building types that would be included in the Overlay District. The uses are based on the available block sizes and existing uses to remain (e.g. the Downtown core). The red ovals represent the historic Downtown core. Given the population growth in Mebane, an expansion of the available commercial-core type buildings (shown in red stripes) is justified to keep up with growth and demand. Buildings here would be a minimum of two stories, with three allowed by right and four with review. Buildings of at least two stories are best at creating a defined and human-scaled space within the right of way. These buildings would have commercial, office or service uses on the ground floor and residential above.

Areas that will be redeveloped on smaller lots or near residential areas should be smaller in scale than the Downtown buildings, but land costs will probably dictate that such development will be denser than the existing single-family nearby. Live-work units or townhouses are the right density in



**Appropriate Building Types for Downtown Expansion.** The buildings at left are in new buildings in New Bern and fit well with the historic context. More modern buildings are also possible. Note that the building above has a fourth floor that steps back from the facade to blend more effectively with nearby 2- and 3-story existing buildings.



KEY	
	HISTORIC CORE COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
	EXPAND DOWNTOWN BUILDING FORM
	LARGER "CAMPUS" BUILDINGS, SETBACKS
	LOW-MED RESIDENTIAL SCALE, FORM
	PUBLIC USE
	ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION

**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 YMCA. Blue areas show public buildings. The larger buildings with wider setbacks and a more "campus-like" site plans will more easily fit in the larger blocks shown.





these locations because their density encourages walking rather than driving when it is located near a vibrant Downtown such as Mebane’s. Parking or garages should be located only at the rear of these buildings to avoid driveways on the street and the blank walls created by garage doors.

Live-work units would be new to Mebane, but would be an attractive addition to housing types in the City. These types of buildings would be suitable for lawyers and other professional, artists, and service businesses and could encourage more people to both live and work in Mebane. Three stories would probably be the minimum required for these units since the ground floor would be for the storefront. These might be suitable for the “leakage” areas north of Ruffin Street. The current commercial uses are not great neighbors to the nearby single-family residential; townhouses or live-work units would be more appropriate. Live-work units would work best in close proximity to the Downtown core.

Townhouses can fit in many locations within the Downtown. If it is not possible to acquire enough properties on the larger blocks to make garden apartments or other larger buildings feasible,

townhouses would be a great alternative. Groups of as few as four or much larger “communities” of townhomes would all be suitable depending on availability.

The last remaining type of building would be larger-scale “campus-like” buildings. These would be particularly appropriate for sites along Center Street near the park. In these locations the traffic moves more quickly and a setback combined with a larger building will mitigate this problem.

For the same reason, the area across from City Hall on Washington is also shown as suitable for a larger building. This is currently a large area of parking with a few small commercial buildings on it. City Hall and it’s adjacent parking is across 5th street, and the railroad tracks are immediately to the north. For all these reasons, traffic is heavy at this intersection, so small-scaled buildings would not work well in this location. At the same time, the very successful Lofts at White Furniture building is across the tracks on Center Street, and

**Medium Density Housing.** *Live-work units are shown above, and an attractive townhome development is shown below. Many Live-work units are at the right of way, but many townhomes are set back slightly from the ROW.*





this suggests that another building of similar scale would complement the Lofts at White Furniture and provide attractive views in both directions. There are also many large buildings on this side of the tracks, including the Kingsdown buildings and City Hall.

### 3.4 Public Improvements

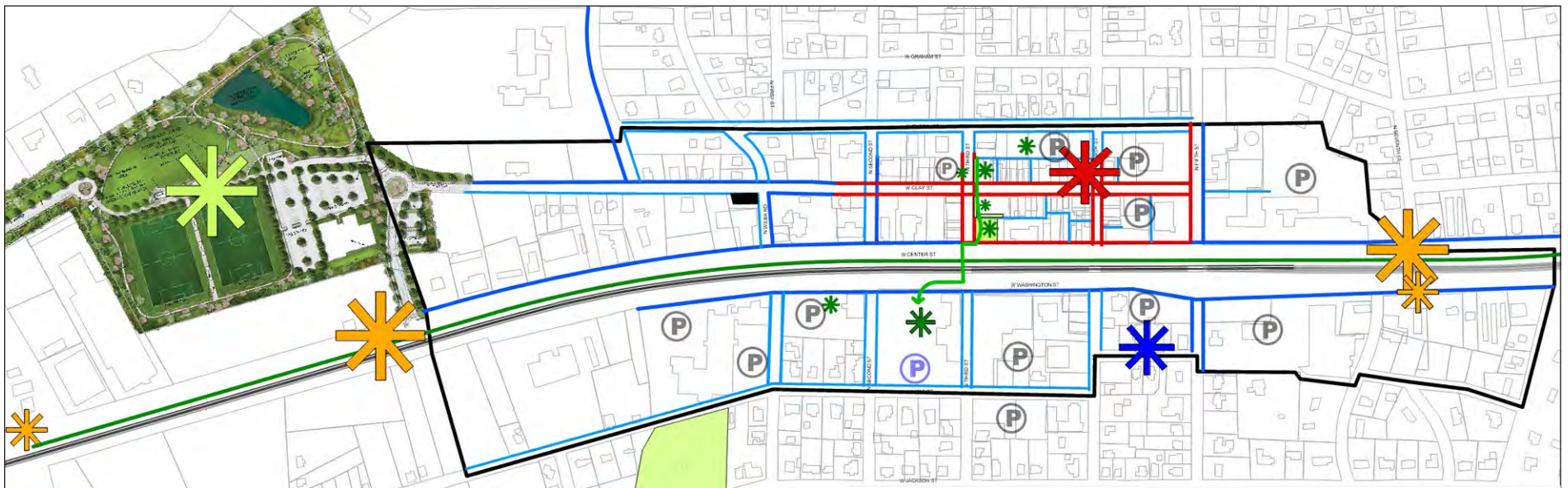
In order to encourage investment in the Downtown, the City should consider key investments in infrastructure and planning. The City has already prepared important studies that look at the entire

community in terms of planning, bicycle and pedestrian connections, and traffic. This study is intended to focus on just the designated Downtown area in order to define what measures are needed to ensure its continued success and future growth.

The plan below shows major destinations within the study area, including the Downtown, City Hall, and the new regional park. Orange asterisks indicate potential gateways into the Downtown, which should be designed when street improvements are implemented. Parking locations are also shown for reference.

One idea in this drawing is an enhanced, pedestrian-friendly north-south connection along Third Street. Third Street is much less congested than Fifth, and in addition there are some existing and potential destinations along this route. Higher level of finish (e.g. brick sidewalks), signage, wider sidewalks where right of way allows, reduction in overhead utilities, and an enhanced railroad crossing will encourage north-south pedestrian movement, which at present is minimal and often intimidating.

Another reason why this route is recommended is that there are several properties that may be



**Public Improvements.** The above map shows important destinations within the study area including the downtown core (red asterisk), City Hall (blue asterisk), and the new regional park (green asterisk). Orange asterisks show potential major and minor gateways into the downtown. The lines illustrate recommended street improvement categories. Red lines are “retail” streets, which are “highest and best” improvements, the dark blue lines are secondary streets which would probably include wider sidewalks than neighborhood streets and would include pedestrian lighting and street trees. The lighter blue lines indicate that eventually there should be continuous concrete sidewalks with handicap accessibility throughout. The dark green lines represent bike paths, and the lighter green line suggests improved north-south pedestrian-friendly sidewalk improvements on Third.

KEY	
	HISTORIC CORE COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS
	CITY HALL
	CURRENT / FUTURE FEATURES
	GATEWAYS
	REGIONAL PARK
	CURRENT / FUTURE PARKING
	CORE AREA RETAIL STREETS
	WIDER CONTINUOUS SIDEWALKS
	NEIGHBORHOOD CONTINUOUS SIDEWALKS
	BIKE LANES
	NORTH-SOUTH CONNECTION



available or are planned for renovations, including the Karma Cafe building, the parking lot across Third to the west, and the 2-story section of the Melville Trading Company building at the southeast corner of Clay and Third Streets (which also has wide sidewalks that would be suitable for outdoor dining), the existing Veteran's Park on the east side of Third, and the large vacant Kingsdown property on the west side of Washington and Third. See Section 4.4 and 4.8 for a concept for the transformation of this space into an attraction for the City and a way to encourage people to explore more of the Downtown on foot. There was also discussion of improvements to the large parking lot north of Clay Street and east of Third, and it is hoped that the Kingsdown site, because of its size, could also accommodate a considerable amount of parking. A mixed-use (commercial/restaurant and residential above) could anchor the south end of this proposed corridor. See Section 4.8 for more about the Kingsdown site.

A bike lane is also shown along the south side of Center Street. This route was recommended in the Bicycle Plan, so this is following up from this recommendation. The south side of the street would be ideal for a separated bike lane because there are no driveways and long stretches with very few crossings, so this would be a very safe route. At the same time, it will be important to improve the sidewalks on the north side because they are deteriorated or absent in many sections between the Downtown core and the regional park. Probably most pedestrians will choose to walk on Clay Street rather than the much more congested Center Street, so continuous sidewalks on both sides of Clay Street are recommended. Clay Street is not particularly suitable for bikes because of the narrow right of way, but it could be signed for shared bike/ auto use ("sharrows").



**Sidewalk Types:** From top to bottom: a neighborhood sidewalk, usually 3-5' wide; an intermediate sidewalk usually 5-8' wide, and a "downtown" sidewalk usually 9-14' wide with room for sidewalk dining and amenities.

### 3.5 Recommended Cross-Sections for Clay and Center Streets in the Downtown Area

The function of successful downtowns and downtown streets has changed over the past 30-40 years. In years past downtowns were the main location for essential services such as clothes, household supplies, professional and personal services, and government. Some of these uses remain (such as services and government), but 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. The proof of this concept can be seen in the transition from enclosed malls to "faux" downtowns (i.e. open air malls) complete with sculpture and all the amenities. But most people, especially young people, prefer authenticity over approximations. Towns and cities that have upgraded their downtown environments are realizing increased investment, improved image, and increased tax base that benefits the entire community.

Part of our charge for this project is to define the initial public improvements that are recommended to encourage investment and growth in the study area. The most vital, well-known, and historic part of the study area is Clay Street between Third and Fourth, and Center Street between Third and Fifth. The following pages present existing conditions and two alternatives for Clay Street and Center Street. During the presentation of the Concepts to the public and to the Advisory Board, two alternatives were selected for both Clay and Center, and these are shown on the following pages.

Discussion of the alternatives follows the graphics. The purpose of the recommended changes is to:

- Better balance vehicular and pedestrian traffic to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment;
- Provide room for sidewalk dining;
- Relocate overhead lines to create space for trees and improve the appearance of the Downtown;
- Upgrade lights and street furniture;
- Upgrade/replace underground utilities;
- Create a setting that will attract new businesses, visitors, and residents to the Downtown; and
- Ensure the moving lanes are still adequate to accommodate vehicular traffic and fire and safety equipment.

Regarding materials for the streetscape, we have shown “red” pavement in the plans and sections that follow. The color signifies the use of pavers rather than concrete, especially on Clay Street. The reasons for this are many. Brick is an historic material that harmonizes with and complements the historic core area. Brick is also as close to a permanent surface as possible, since if it is set in sand it can be removed for trenching and replaced seamlessly. There are many examples of historic brick streets that are hundreds of years old that are still serviceable. Concrete, on the other hand, will discolor and crack, likely within 5-10 years. If the surface needs to be trenched, the color of the new concrete will never match the old concrete. Textured concrete and colored concrete likewise do not patch well. In the overall consideration of costs (i.e. adding in the cost of utility upgrades and replacement) the additional cost to upgrade to brick paving is usually only about 10%, and when considering the longevity and appearance of brick over time, the cost is lower.



*Clay Street (left) has attractive historic buildings and many interesting businesses, but also has narrow sidewalks and overhead lines that limit amenities. The photo below shows that the sidewalks on Clay Street will need to be replaced soon. Old concrete does not match patched concrete.*

On Center Street, the sidewalk in the area of existing historic buildings is in good condition, but we have shown the possibility of adding tree planting areas. In the area where trees are added (approximately half the width including a concrete strip by the curb) there could be pavers between the tree pits rather than new concrete to allow installation of an improved soil trench for the trees and placement of water meters and new upgraded street lights. These concepts will require further consideration when construction documents are prepared.





## Clay Street Improvements

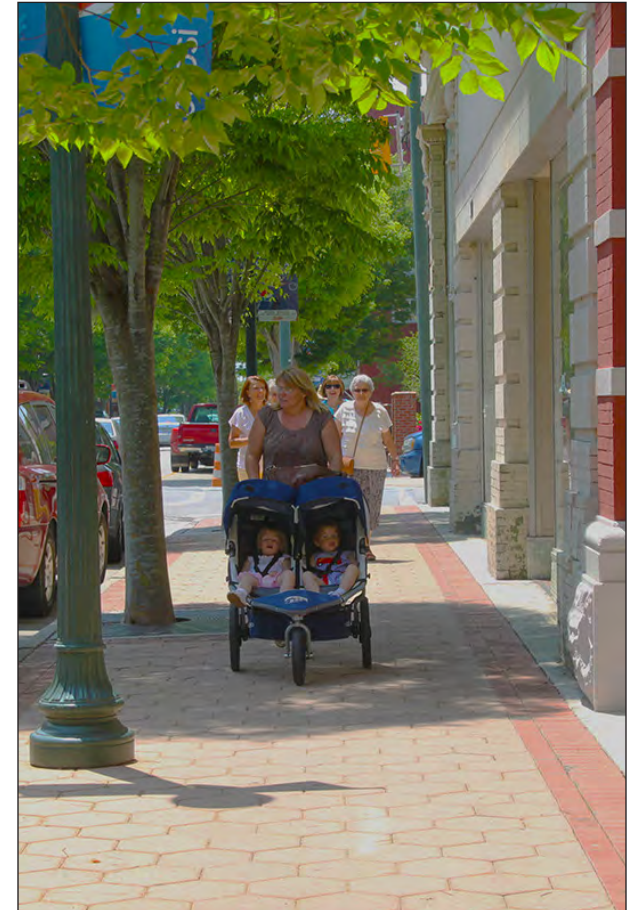
Clay Street has an approximate 60-foot right of way. This is quite narrow, and the allocation of space to vehicles vs. pedestrians tilts heavily towards vehicles. This, combined with the visually intrusive overhead lines on both sides of the street creates some challenges to creating more attractive pedestrian and merchant-friendly sidewalks. The City and the merchants have, in spite of these issues, managed to create a very lively Downtown with many interesting and successful businesses. But most business owners feel that the Downtown has the potential to be much more successful than it is with an enhanced environment, more parking, and a larger number of businesses, especially restaurants.

There are standards that suggest that two-way moving lanes, when taken together, should measure at least 24' so that if there are cars moving both ways, there is still sufficient room for an emergency vehicle such as a fire truck to get through. Also, most parallel parking lane allocations are 8', but on Clay Street there is only 7' allocated. So there is no "give" in the design to provide additional space for pedestrians, amenities such as trees and site furniture, or for sidewalk dining. Alternative One shows an attempt to keep the allotments of space similar, yet create slightly wider sidewalks. This does not meet the test of allowing 24' in moving lanes.

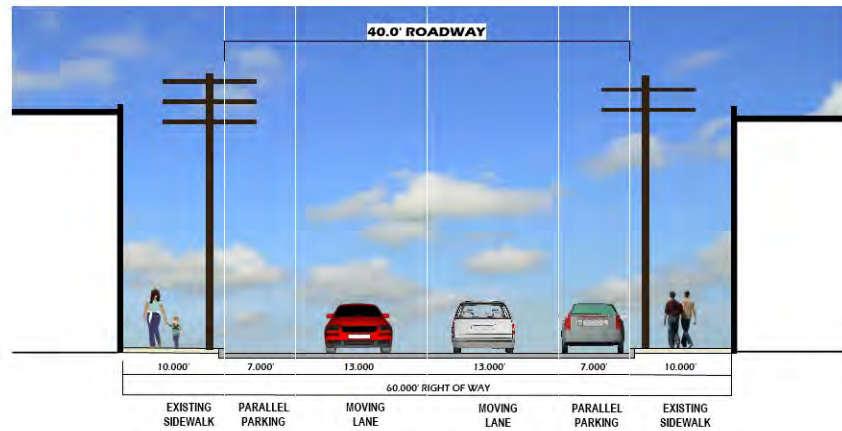
The second alternative achieves more valuable sidewalk space by removing one lane of parking on the north side allocating an additional 4' to sidewalks on both sides of the street. This provides two 12' moving lanes, one 8' parking lane, and two 14' sidewalks. Fourteen feet is adequate for street trees 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 Street.

**The next three pages show the existing conditions on Clay between Fourth and Third, followed by two concepts for improvements.**



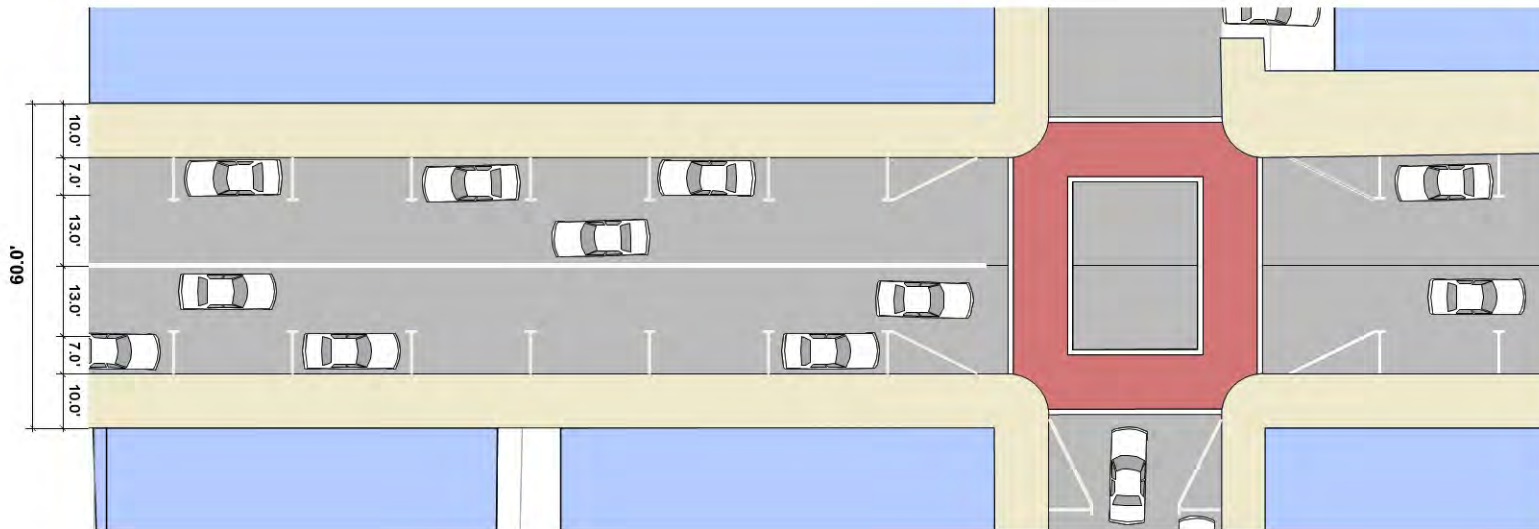
*These Before (left) and After photos from New Bern demonstrate the advantages of pavers over concrete. Notice the mismatched patch score lines and patched areas near the mailbox in the photo at left. The pavers shown above (including concrete pavers designed for New Bern combined with brick) provide an attractive, colorful surface that can be removed and replaced and that complements the adjacent historic buildings.*



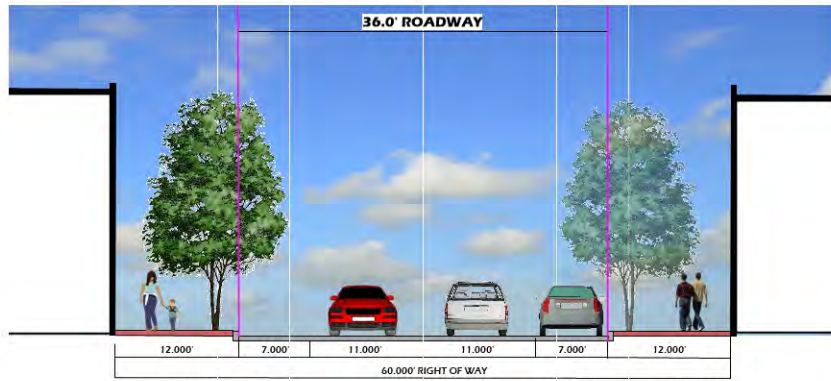
EXISTING CROSS-SECTION CLAY STREET @ 4TH STREET

**CLAY STREET EXISTING CONDITIONS  
(~60' Right of Way)**

- 2- 13' MOVING LANES
- 2- 7' PARALLEL PARKING LANES
- 2- 10' SIDEWALKS



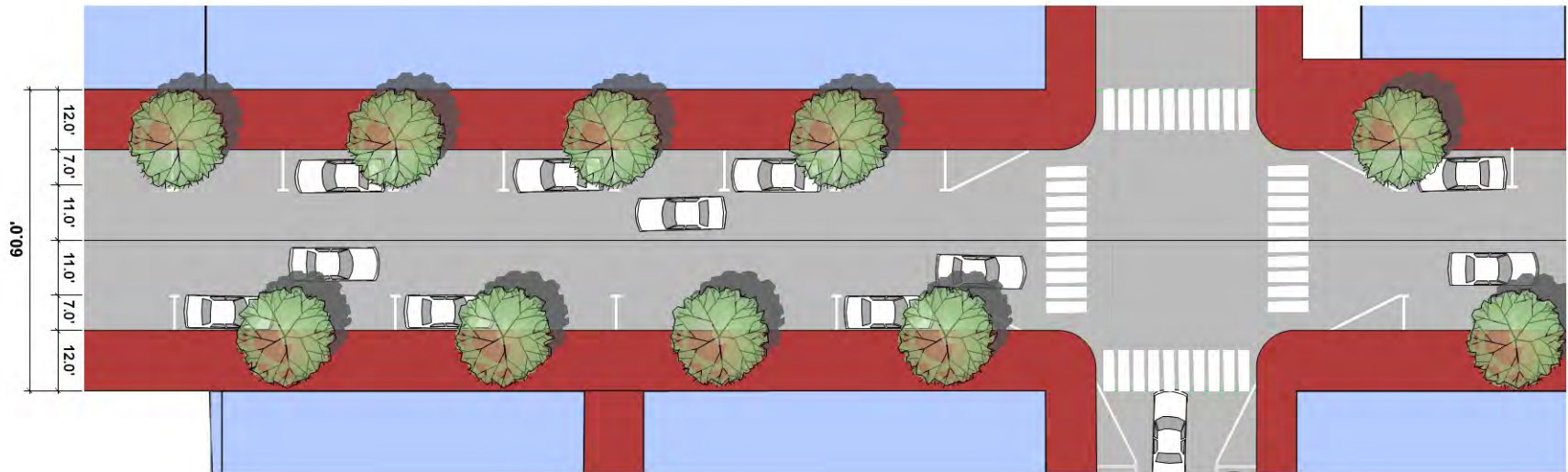


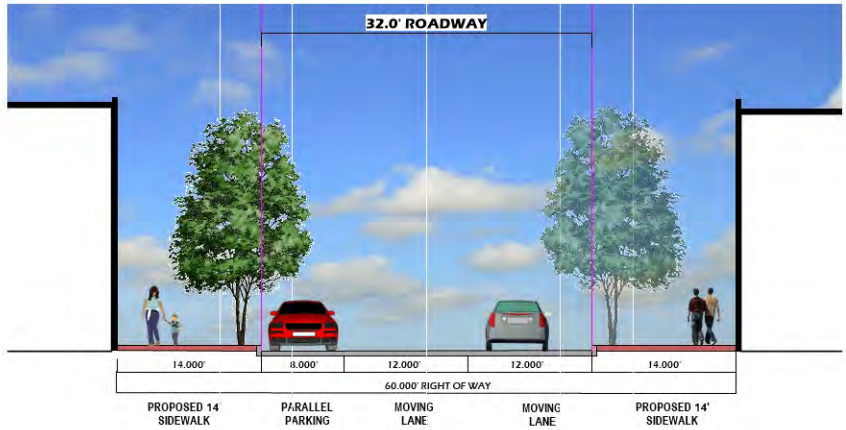


CONCEPT ONE: CROSS-SECTION CLAY STREET @ 4TH STREET

**CLAY STREET - ALTERNATE ONE**  
 (~60' Right of Way)

2- 11' MOVING LANES (Narrowed by 2' each)  
 2- 7' PARALLEL PARKING LANES (Same)  
 2- 12' SIDEWALKS (2' wider each side)





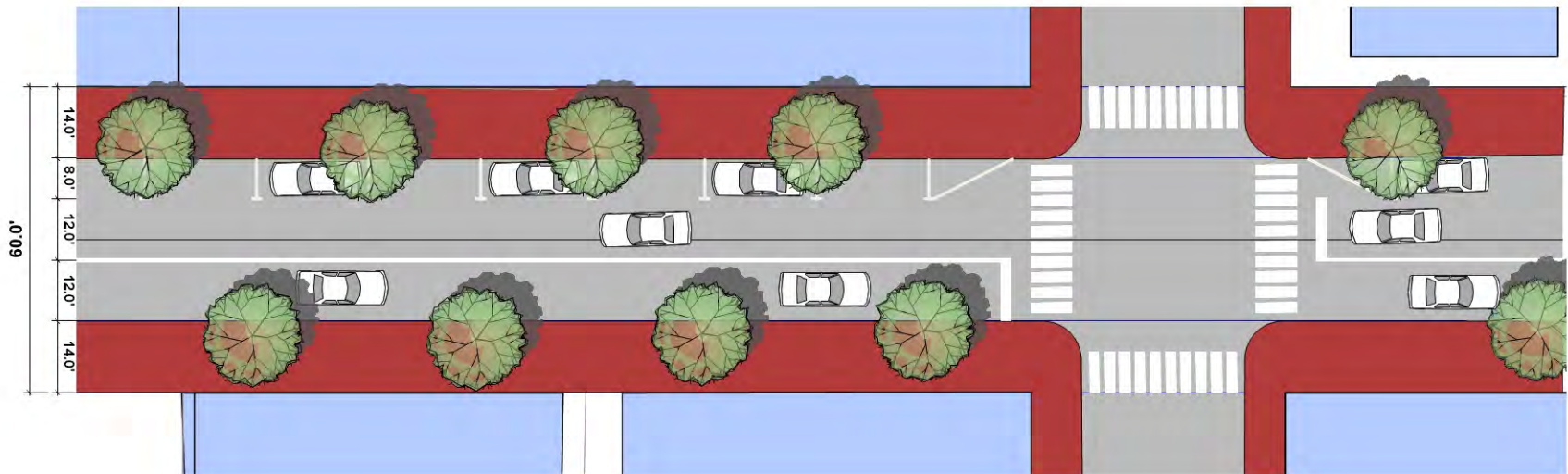
**CLAY STREET ALTERNATE 2**  
 (~60' Right of Way)

2- 14' MOVING LANES (or 3 - 9' lanes with turning lane added at corners)

1- 8' PARALLEL PARKING LANES (Each 1' wider)

2- 14' SIDEWALKS (4' wider each side)

CONCEPT TWO: CROSS-SECTION CLAY STREET @ 4TH STREET





## 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. On the south side of the ROW there is a slope up to the railroad tracks which makes it impossible to have a sidewalk on that side. This makes it necessary for passengers in parked cars on this side to exit onto the sloped grass which is awkward, or further to the west onto more level grass, which can be a problem in bad weather.

Concept One for Center Street narrows the moving lanes to two 12' lanes, which allows for the creation of a left turn lane at the intersections. If the parking lanes are left as they are (two at 7') this provides room for two 5' bike lanes, one in each direction. The 17' sidewalk remains, although it could be upgraded to include trees and hedges, pedestrian lights and furniture, and if desired, upgraded pavement. The problem with this solution is that the 5' lane on the north side would have to travel past parked cars (with doors swinging open) and driveways. If the bike lane continues on towards the regional park, the street narrows and the number of driveways increases, making this route dangerous for bikes.

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 of the road between Fifth Street and Moore Road (almost a mile) this is by far the safest route for bikes. This concept also allows for two 14' moving lanes,



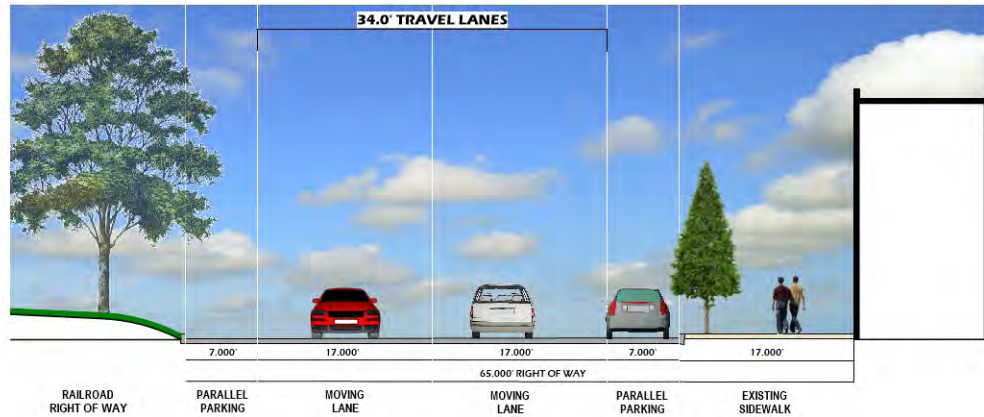
*Center Street has attractive historic buildings, (several of which have been restored) and a growing number of downtown uses. It has the advantage of a 17' wide sidewalk suitable for sidewalk dining and street tree planting, but has to deal with much heavier vehicular traffic and the noise and vibration caused by the many trains running through each day.*

divided into three 9' lanes to create a 9' turning lane (or a few parking spaces can be removed at the corners), which is ample space for both cars and trucks, yet enough narrower than existing to slow down traffic, which is certainly desirable. The bypass being constructed to the west will divert some of the through truck traffic from Center Street, which will further enhance and quieten the street. Also included in this concept is one 8' parking lane and the same 17' sidewalk (with possible enhancements). This is the recommended alternative.

Concept Two is preferred because of the increased bike safety, and also shows elongated tree pits that could allow for the planting of shrubs that would partially screen both parked cars and traffic. Note that the tree pits are placed back from the curb to allow access to parked vehicles. Because of the wider sidewalks, it would also be possible to provide at least one handicap space per block, since handicap spaces require a ramp to be built within the sidewalk area.

The 17' sidewalk on the north side is quite generous for a pedestrian area, and it would be possible to have ample sidewalk dining there, but there are only a couple of restaurants there at present; one has courtyard dining to the rear, and the owner of the other stated that the noise from the trains and vehicular traffic make it difficult to consider outside dining. It is possible if more visual barriers to the train tracks (such as hedges or shrubs) and larger shade trees were planted along the north side that this area would become more welcoming for activities on the sidewalk.

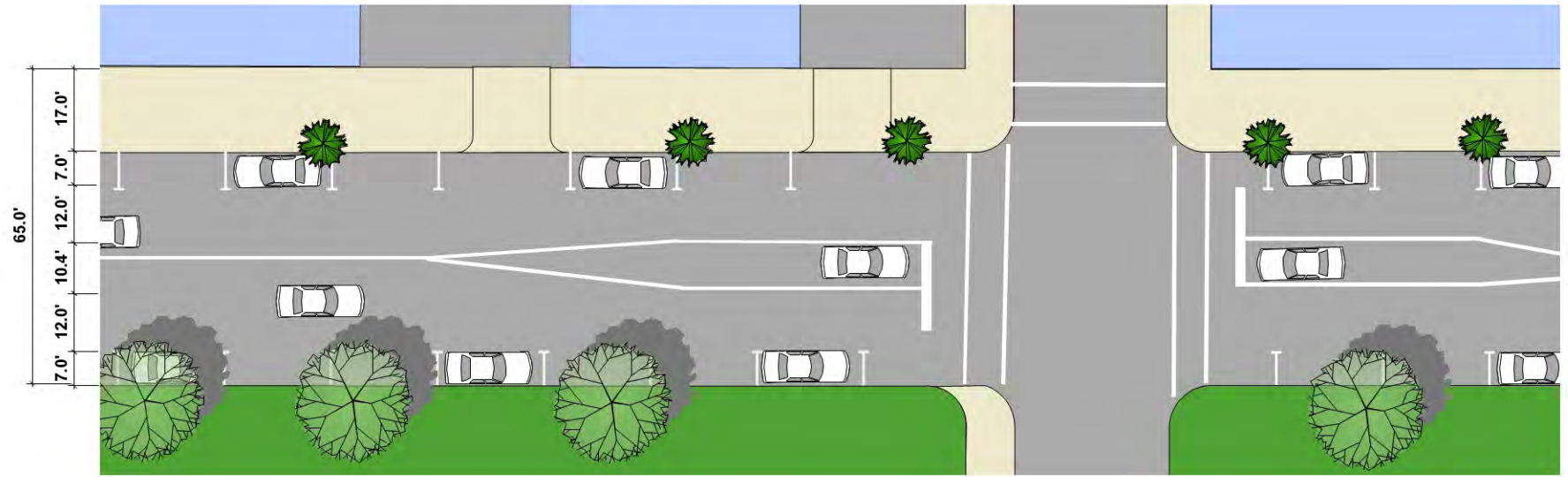
**The next three pages show the existing conditions on Center Street between Fourth and Third, followed by two concepts for improvements to this block and others in the expanded core area.**



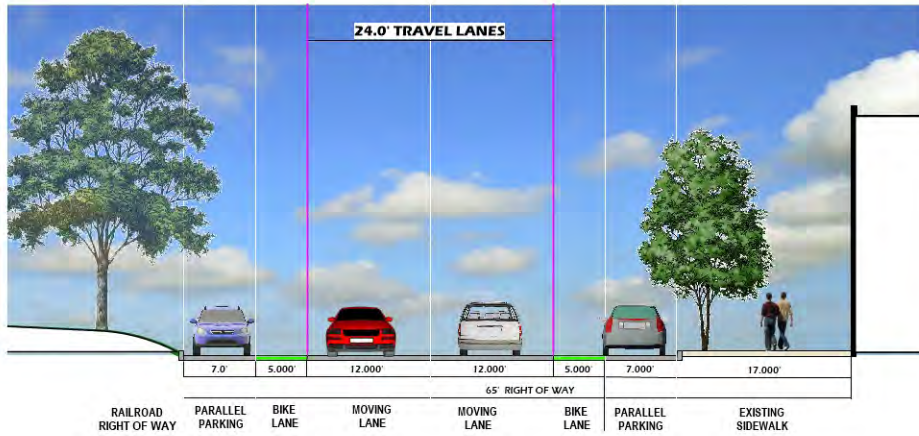
**CENTER STREET EXISTING**  
 (~65' Right of Way)

**2- 17' MOVING LANES (Plus Turning)**  
**2- 7' PARALLEL PARKING LANES**  
**1- 17' SIDEWALK**

EXISTING CROSS-SECTION CENTER STREET @ 4TH STREET



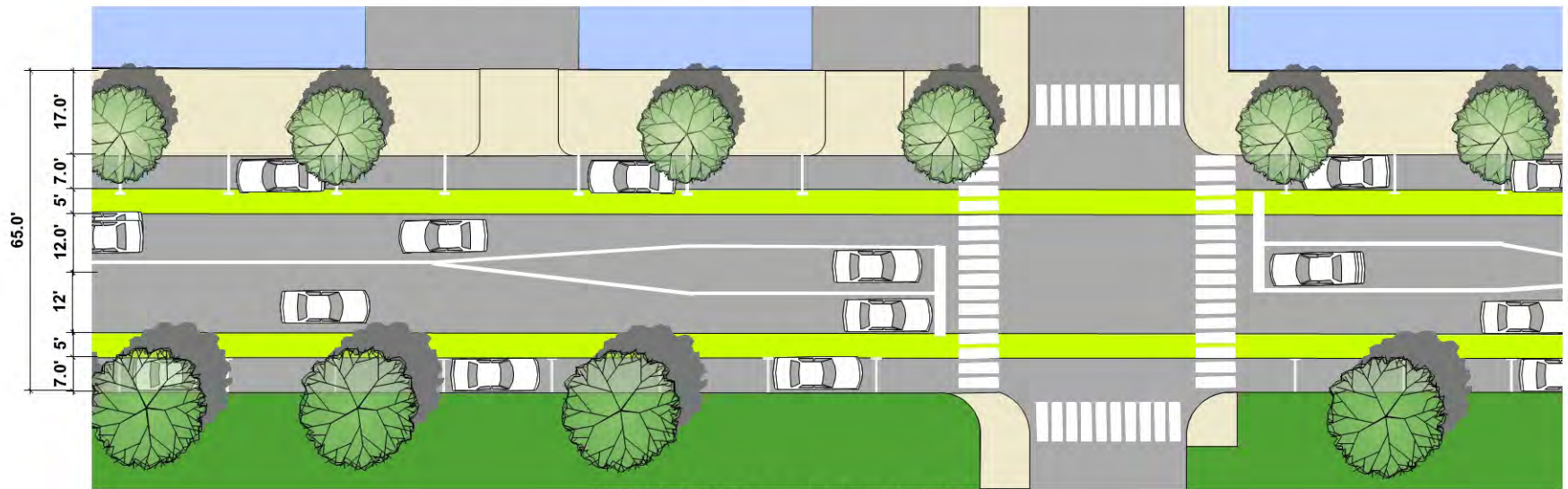


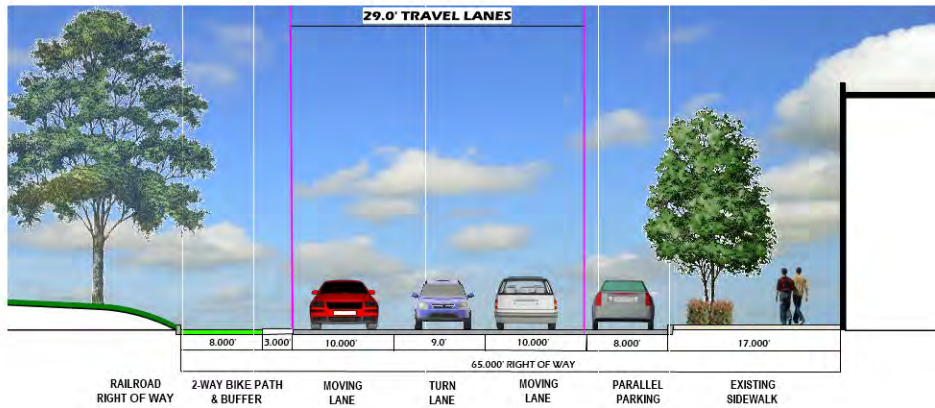


**CENTER STREET ALTERNATE 1**  
 (~65' Right of Way)

- 2- 12' MOVING LANES Plus Turn (Narrowed)
- 2- 7' PARALLEL PARKING LANES (Same)
- 2- 5' BIKE LANES (Added)
- 1- 17' SIDEWALK (Same)

CONCEPT ONE: CROSS-SECTION CENTER STREET @ 4TH STREET

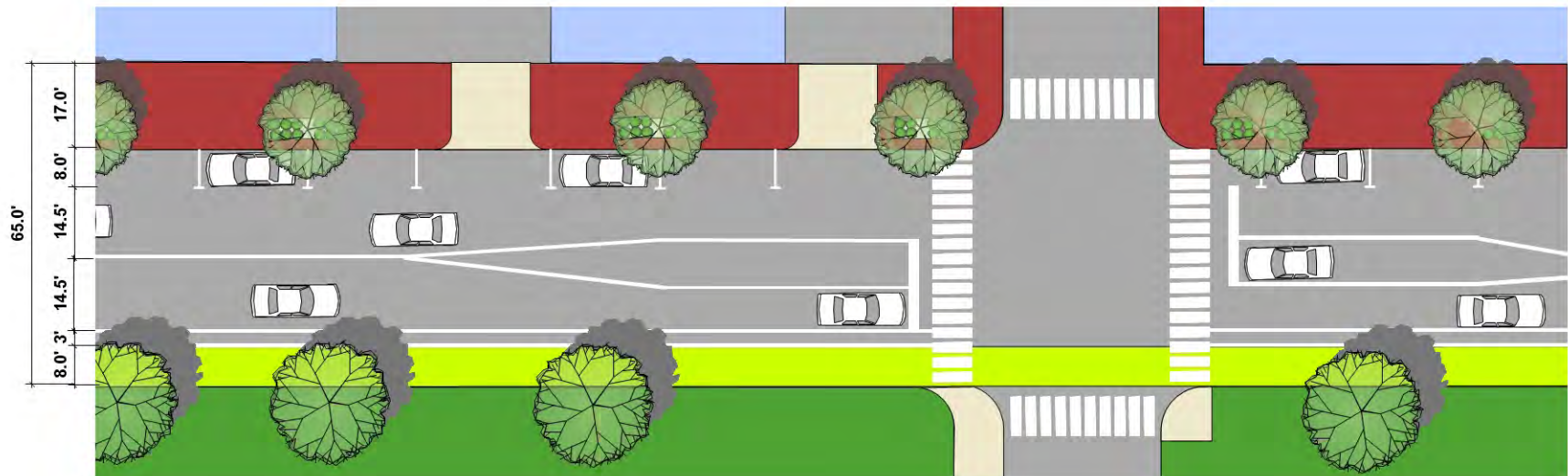




**CENTER STREET ALTERNATE 2**  
(~65' Right of Way)

- 2- 18" MOVING LANES Plus Turn lane at intersections (Narrowed)
- 1- 8' PARALLEL PARKING LANE (Remove 1 lane of parking)
- 1- 11" 2-WAY PROTECTED BIKE LANE (Added)

CONCEPT TWO: CROSS-SECTION CENTER STREET @ 4TH STREET





**Center Street Improvements (cont'd)**

There is also the possibility of celebrating the trains in some artistic (yet safe) way. An example might be an interactive art installation separated from the tracks with a fence, that would light up in the direction of the train. Mebane was founded in part because of it's proximity to the train as shown by the City logo and historic photos, so a physical method of celebrating this would add to Mebane's character. This would of course be in addition to the attractive landscaping along the tracks that already makes Mebane stand out among North Carolina's many railroad towns.

An important goal for any changes to the cross-section of Center Street is to make room for bicycle lanes. Clay Street is too narrow to accommodate dedicated bike lanes, and since the Bike/Ped Plan calls for bike paths along Center Street, the concepts demonstrate a couple of ways this could be accomplished.

**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.

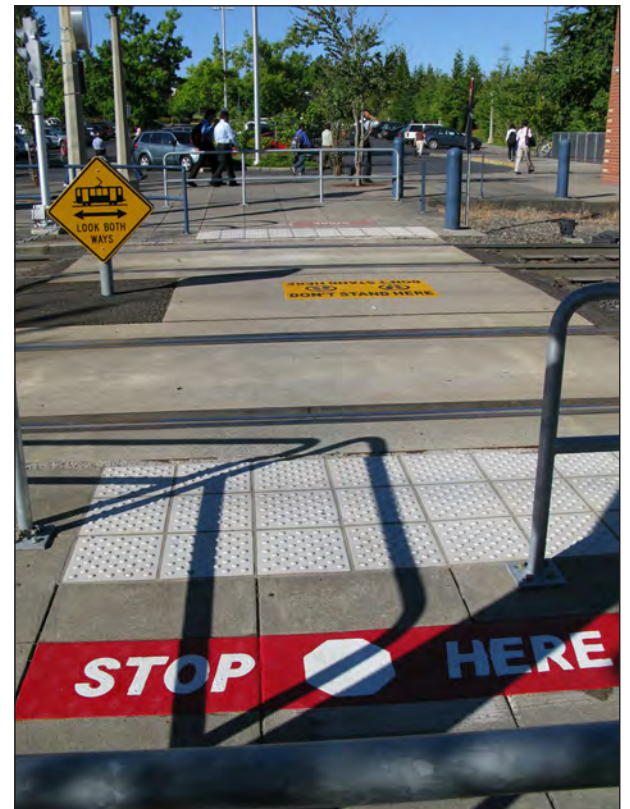
At a minimum, the sidewalks along Third through Fifth between Clay and Center Streets should be improved to connect these two important streets. In some cases, such as the east side of Fifth north of Clay, improvements should be included. Further, the concept plan on page 20 suggests

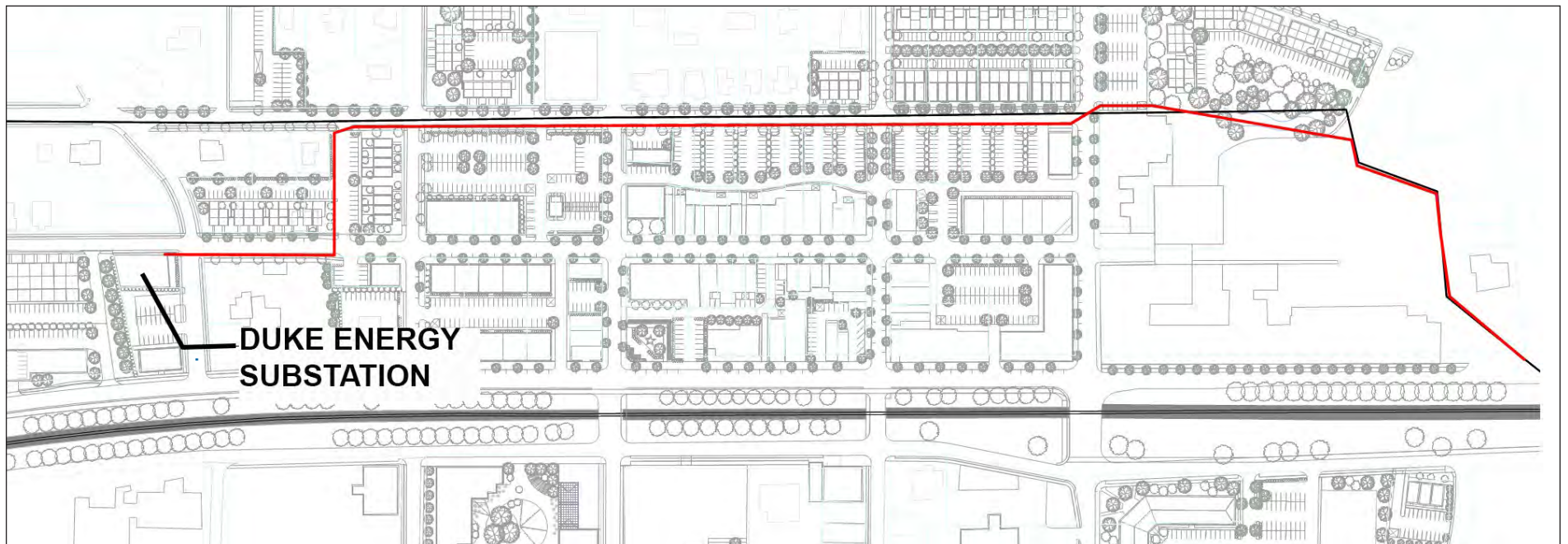
a strengthened pedestrian connection from Ruffin to Center Streets and from there across the tracks to Washington and then one block to the west to Second if and when the Kingsdown property is redeveloped. Even if this property is not developed, the enhanced pedestrian connection across the tracks at Third, and possibly also at Fourth, would encourage pedestrians to venture across the tracks without getting back in their cars to do it. Crossing enhancements could include improved



**Bike Lane Example:** The photo above shows an 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..

**Pedestrian/Bike Railroad Safety Enhancements.** The top photo shows two sets of gates and flashing lights in each direction, one for vehicles and one for pedestrians and bikes. The lower photo does not have a physical barrier, but uses many other methods, including signs, fencing, domed pavers (for the visually impaired) to alert pedestrians and cyclists to the dangers. 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.

walkways and possibly additional barriers and lights exclusively for pedestrians. These safety measures should also be installed at the Fifth Street crossing, although pedestrian traffic should not be encouraged at this intersection. See examples of railroad pedestrian crossing enhancements, on the previous page.

### Overhead Utility Lines

The overhead utility lines in Downtown are much more dominant than in most communities. The City did look at burying the lines in within the Downtown in 2002 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, an alternative to burying the lines should be considered. 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 Street.

It is more difficult to come up with a solution for the cross streets. These streets might have to keep the overhead lines, although if Third is planned for pedestrians it would be desirable to consider ways to mitigate them on this street.

The plan shows trees of different types, including a small tree shown where there are now or might be overhead lines in the future (e.g. south side of Ruffin). Small trees will not present future conflicts with overhead lines. See the illustration above that shows the area we would recommend for overhead line relocation.

It is our hope that Duke Energy will be a partner in this process because there is the potential for greatly expanding their customer base, with an additional 266,000 s.f. in the expanded core area alone.

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## 4.0 VISION PLAN

### 4.1 Introduction

The Vision Plan (shown on next page) 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. The City is exploring the use of an Overlay District for the study area which will set up guidelines for the placement and mass of buildings, but not necessarily their use. See Section 3 of this report for a discussion of the principles of Overlay Districts and Form-Based Codes.

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. Although all uses in the study area are grandfathered, the new Overlay District will apply once the property changes ownership or use. An example of redevelopment of one of the larger blocks in the western section of the study area illustrates how the process can take place over time with the acquisition of different portions of the block (perhaps by different developers) over time. See page 43.

Property values in Mebane are fairly high, so it may be that redevelopment will not proceed very quickly in the early years of the plan. In many cities, City leadership has taken an active role in assisting with the process. Examples of this in Mebane include the White Furniture building redevelopment and the City's preliminary exploration for a suitable site for a YMCA. If the plan is to succeed, the City must continue to play a leadership role by investing in infrastructure and providing support for merchants, property owners and potential investors.

The discussions with the advisory board and the public about the possibility of establishing a Main Street program should be pursued. A Main Street program will create a quasi-public entity whose sole purpose is to improve the downtown area through historic preservation, marketing, events, management, and establishment, and/or support for allied organizations. Often such an organization will structure a subsidiary that is a 501(c)3 to allow tax-exempt contributions of land or buildings for redevelopment and for the public good. This will be discussed in greater detail in the Implementation section (Section 5.0).

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, townhomes 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 9. Existing parking to remain is

shown without spaces drawn and are not enumerated since they do not add to the parking available.

The study area is shown as a black outline in the plan (and shown in white on the aerial to make it more visible). The original study boundary ended at Ruffin Street to the north, The Lofts at White Furniture building as shown to the east; the City Hall building on the south of the Railroad; and otherwise as shown. The boundaries were extended north toward Graham Street because commercial uses have crept into the neighborhood and that issue needed to be addressed.

Discussion of the plan including enlargements of individual blocks, beginning with the downtown historic core and moving outward from there.

### 4.2 The Core Retail Area

The core blocks of the retail area are Clay Street and Center Street between 5th and 2nd Streets (see map on Page 37). These two blocks define the character of downtown Mebane and are quite successful, with restaurants, and shops and very few vacancies on the ground floor. What is needed in these blocks is more parking and an enhanced public environment. For an existing photo and proposed sketch view of the central block of Clay between Fourth and Third, see page 6.

An improved streetscape on Clay with more room for sidewalk dining would help the merchants attract more business. In order to accomplish this, it would be highly desirable for the overhead utility lines to be buried or relocated. The recommended place for relocation would be the south side of Ruffin Street where there are few buildings. As discussed in the Concepts section, removing parking on the south side of Clay would allow widening of the sidewalks. Before these improvements are made, it will be necessary to replace this parking





*Top: Existing Conditions aerial. Bottom: Vision Plan. Next sections will show 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).*





*Proposed Clay Street Improvements.* The “before” (left) and “after” view 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.







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 design for this space is shown above (Block 1) and on the next page, including a “before” photo and “after” sketch. Parking improvements and utility relocation would be initial steps before Clay Street improvements. The proposed cross section for Clay is Alternate 2 in Section 3.

There are two pedestrian alleys on the north side of Clay street that connect to future improved parking. Some arrangement with owners would be needed to allow pedestrian access and improve these spaces to make them more welcoming and safe. Wayfinding signs along and before the intersections will be needed to direct visitors to parking.



*The Historic Downtown Core between Center and Ruffin, Fourth and Third. Left: Proposed, Above, Existing.*

The arrangement of parking on the block between Clay and Center (Block 2) is a little more constrained. Shared day/night parking is recommended. If any buildings must be removed in this block in the future, well-designed and screened parking should be considered. The plan for adjacent blocks also shows additional opportunities for shared parking to serve the entire downtown area.

The alley that runs through the middle of the block between Clay and Center presents an opportunity for the creation of a shared vehicular/pedestrian/service alley with a pedestrian connection south to Center Street and a vehicle/pedestrian connection north to Clay Street. An example of an improved alley is shown at right. Improvements to the alley create a more attractive setting for the green Melville Trading Company building at the southeast corner of Clay and Third. The wider sidewalk on Clay and the setback from the alley provide room for sidewalk dining in addition to off-street deliveries. It is also hoped that more pedestrian activities in the alley and on Third will encourage more use of the Veterans Park at the northeast corner of



*Shared Pedestrian/Vehicular Alley in Asheville. This alley is all at the same elevation, with cars separated from pedestrians with bollards.*



*Mebane Alley. This attractive alley was improved by the owners of The Trackside Market on Center Street. The entrance is from parking, from the back of the store, and from a gated entry on 4th.*





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



Third and Center.

There is already one attractive alley improvement in the core area. This is in the interior of the southern block between Clay and Center, Fourth and Third behind the Trackside Market. See image on page 37.

The only new (or expanded) building in the core area is at the northeast corner of Clay and Third on Block 1, 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. The building is shown expanded to the western edge of the property, with the area between the building and the street envisioned as a shady walled courtyard. Parking would be available in the new parking lot at the back of the block, and in the Farmer’s Market lot to the west (see description on page 41) when the market is not active.

### 4.3 Core Expansion East

The 2 blocks to the east of the core area are shown at right. On the block north of Clay there is currently a Dollar General Store in the middle of the block (see aerial inset at lower right) and one remaining older building on the southwest corner. It is our understanding that the Dollar General Store has recently renewed their lease for another 10 years, but the site placement of this building is not conducive to pedestrian activity, so for the future, a more urban configuration of buildings is shown. These are envisioned as 3-story mixed use with commercial on the ground floor and residential or office above. This site placement and building type, combined with improvements to the sidewalks, would encourage residents of The Lofts at White Furniture building to walk downtown and conversely, would encourage people visiting the core area to walk further toward Fifth Street and new and renovated buildings north on Fifth. The existing public parking is shown extended towards the east and entrances



*Core Area East. The White Furniture building is in the lower right (Southeast). New Townhomes are shown on property in the same ownership to the north of the parking lot. There are currently two single-story commercial strip uses on the two blocks facing Fifth (Dollar General and The Lofts at White Furniture \*\*), and these are shown as being eventually replaced by new Mixed Use Commercial. Live-Work units are shown on the north side of Ruffin, and additional Townhomes are shown on the north side of that block. See following pages for discussion of these blocks.*



to parking on each block face are shown. Parking for the block is shown as an extension of the public parking on the northwest corner of the block.

Until the possibility of redeveloping this block becomes a reality, the appearance of the block could be improved by planting 30-36" hedges under the Crepe myrtles around the entire block, and by extending a walk and a landscape strip at least 20' wide from the sidewalk to the entrance of the building. This would remove parking from in front of the entrance and require auto circulation around the building. As everywhere in the downtown area, the dumpsters in the rear should be screened and the driveways improved and narrowed on the north side of the block.

The remaining building on the southwest corner of this block has head-in parking off Fourth Street. This parking arrangement should be removed and replaced by parallel parking for pedestrian safety. Also please note that handicap parking is shown immediately to the east of the existing building (and the small existing park). This parking is to address the need for handicap parking in the core downtown area (on-street handicap parking is difficult to accomplish because of the width required). Off-street handicap parking for Clay Street is not feasible in the lot north of Clay between 4th and 3rd because of grade differences. Another pod of handicap parking is shown on the block west of the Core block near the proposed Farmers Market location.

The block between Clay and Center includes a furniture store (formerly a pharmacy) on the east side across from The Lofts at White Furniture building. There is a collection of historic commercial buildings facing Fourth Street at the other end of the block, and a set of buildings on Center Street, including the attractively restored Five Star building.

The plan for this block shows the current furniture store replaced with an "L" shaped building that faces Fifth and Center, with common parking

located in the center of the block on Clay. Parking here and elsewhere throughout the downtown should be screened with a 30"-36" hedge or wall and trees along the screened area and within the lots over a certain size.

Two additional blocks are shown on this section of the plan: Block A and Block B. Although they are outside the study area, they are important because they are examples of blocks in which commercial uses have "bled" into the surrounding neighborhoods. This issue should be addressed when an Overlay District is put in place to either disallow commercial uses in the future, or allow them to transition to other uses or buildings forms. One set of buildings forms that should probably not be allowed in these transition areas is strip commercial. The uses shown in these blocks are denser than the single-family residential nearby, but are still primarily residential so will be "good neighbors" to surrounding uses. An economic analysis of Block A as conceived is included in Appendix B.

Block A shows Live-Work units on the south side of the block, and Townhomes on the north side, with parking in the center of the block. Live-Work units would be 3 stories with the bottom level being devoted to office or retail uses, and the upper stories devoted to the living space for the person or persons running the first floor use. Such specialized units would be suitable around the



**Live-Work Units.** This building type has a single owner with office space or shops on the first floor and residences above. These units are usually a little higher-end than townhomes and average three or even four stories rather than two-three as with townhouses. They can have either flat or sloped roofs.



**Townhomes.** This category includes patio homes, townhomes and zero-lot-line homes. They are often two stories, but can be three (especially if they have garages). They usually have sloped roofs and fit in well with traditional single-family neighborhoods.

downtown core and might have the added benefit of encouraging more people to both live and work in Mebane.

On the north side of this block Townhomes are shown. The scale of these buildings would be a little smaller at 2 stories. This would work as an effective transition in size from the downtown to the townhomes and then to single-family residential.

Townhomes are also shown on Block B. This is part of The Lofts at White Furniture property, and it is our understanding that they intend something similar on this section of their land. The parcel slopes up from the parking lot, so we showed the steeper part of the parcel as landscaped and with a small pond, which will also serve to screen the large parking lot to the south.

#### 4.4 Core Expansion West & Farmers Market

These two blocks currently have a mismatched set of buildings. There are three historic buildings on the east side of Block 6, but the one closest to Center Street has been severely altered. In the plan closeup at right, the altered building is shown with courtyard dining rather than a parking lot on Center Street.

Parking for all three buildings is shown off Third Street, or with proper screening from the street there could also be head-in parking along the backs of the buildings. There are two bank buildings on the west end of this block, one is not historic is and not in great shape, and the other (we understand) is historic, but is in the middle of the lot, so in the long term, does not promote walkability.

On block 5 there are several single-story historic buildings in very bad condition, a strip of commercial buildings set back from the street on the southwest corner of Block 5 (including A1 Auto Parts and the “Mebane Knights” restaurant), a new

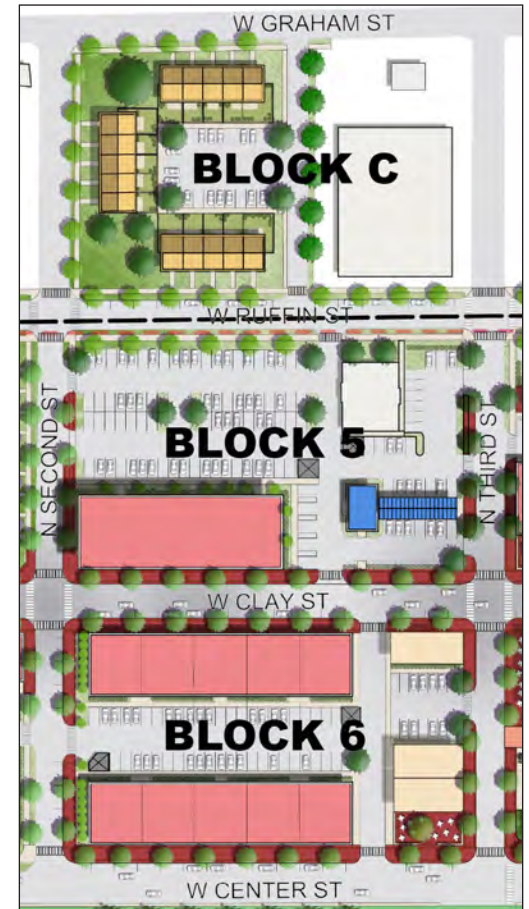
commercial insurance building on the northeast corner of the same block, and an older brick commercial building currently occupied by a heating and air conditioning company with an unscreened gravel parking lot on the northwest corner of the block.

This block is the most likely to be an earlier phase of downtown core expansion, mostly because there is a parking lot on the southeast corner and three small and underutilized buildings in poor condition along Clay to the west. Owners of the Mebane Knights building might also benefit from a more traditional urban building closer to the sidewalk, either in the same location or further to the east.

The parking lot on the southeast corner of Block 5 is shown as a Farmers Market with associated parking and public restrooms (blue buildings). This small configuration formalizes the current use of this parking lot for a Farmers Market with a covered shelter. When not used as a Farmers Market this lot will provide additional parking for the downtown and the shelter could be used for other purposes. There was public discussion of other possible locations for the market, but we strongly recommend a location within easy walking distance of the downtown as the best location to create synergy for both the market and the downtown.



*Core West Expansion Area (right) between Second and Third, Ruffin and Center Streets, and Block C extending north to Graham Street. The Farmers Market is shown in blue. Existing Conditions, above.*



See Appendix B for an economic analysis of a possible Farmers Market. There are probably other locations for the Farmers Market, but we strongly recommend that the location should be within easy walking distance of the Core area, since this will help both the downtown and the market. Also, since public bathrooms are a logical addition to the market and since they are also needed downtown, this could be a shared use.

Permanent public handicap parking is shown immediately to the west of the Farmers Market office/restrooms. This would give convenient handicap access to the downtown from the west.





**Possible Farmers Market Components.** A shelter such as the one shown above, in wood or metal would be suitable for a Farmers Market shelter.

The owners of the non-historic bank building in the center of Block 6 may see the value of selling or participating in a denser development scenario. It might even be possible to place a bank on the east end of the ground floor of a multi-story building and have a drive-through window in the widened version of the driveway shown behind the existing buildings facing Third Street.

The new buildings shown on these two blocks would probably be three stories with office or commercial on the ground floor and residential above. Office might be more suitable for the building shown on Center Street because of the traffic on Center. The buildings shown on Block 6 are shown divided into 5 subsections. This is to indicate that these buildings could be five buildings with common walls, or a single building with 5 bays or storefronts on the ground floor. The building shown on the south side of Block 5 is shown as one building, but these building types (separate buildings with common walls or one building) are interchangeable.

On Block C there is a single small brick building housing an accounting firm on the southwest corner, surrounded by a very large area of parking and a brick garage and unimproved parking lot

to the north. This half block would be ideal for a townhome/patio home development as shown in the drawing to the left.

There is a large single story “Little Shops” building on the east half of Block C, and if the businesses are viable there is no rush to redevelop the site, but the low quality of the building may make redevelopment attractive over time. The townhomes shown on the west side of the block could be extended into this part of the block, or if the Live-Work units prove to be successful, more on these along Ruffin Street (not Graham Street) could be built.

### 4.5 Second to Wilba Streets

These blocks form a transition from core commercial mixed-use to predominantly residential with some commercial. The transitional uses are shown on the east side of Blocks 7 and 8 along Second, and also along Center. On Block 8 most of the existing uses remain, including the gas station and the funeral home. The gas station was left in place for a couple of reasons: 1) changing uses from a gas station is expensive because of the tanks and potential brownfields complications; and 2) it is the only gas station in the downtown. The funeral home is new and was well-designed. Even though not located on the street, it has a presence along Center and a direct pedestrian connection from the front door to Center Street. A new commercial building is shown on the northeast corner of this block in order to “hold the corner.” This could be an office or storefront, but probably not residential.

Block 7 is shown as entirely residential with Live-Work units on the east side facing Second and townhomes on the remainder of the block, but the entire block could be townhomes. An historic residential property on the northwest corner remains in the plan because it is an historic house in good condition.

Block D includes an attractive brick industrial-type building. A lighting store is located in the north half of



*Between Second and Wilba, Ruffin and Center. An aerial photo of existing conditions is below.*





the building, and another use could be located on the south end, such as office or commercial.

### 4.6 Development Between Wilba and Charles

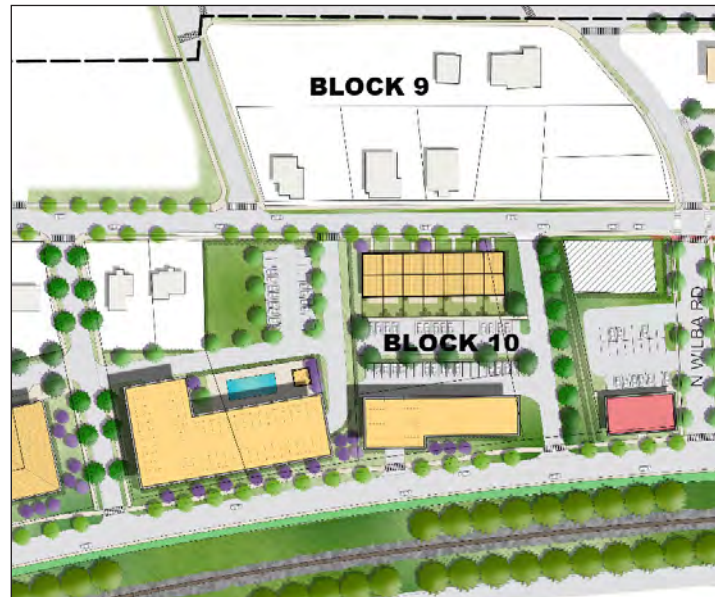
This is a very large block with a wide mix of uses, including single family residential, a vacant commercial/industrial building and seafood restaurant, Pelican’s Snoballs, vacant land along Clay, a couple of partially-vacant auto-related businesses, and the electrical substation at Clay and Wilba.

Block 9 has 5 single family residential properties on Clay. It may be impractical to consider new development on the two properties directly across from the Duke Energy substation, so we have not shown any there, or the existing buildings could remain. Further to the west along Clay these buildings could be rehabbed and also remain in their current use.

The primary frontage for Block 10 could be Center Street and because the block is so big and the street carries a large volume of traffic Buildings on Center are shown set back from the ROW. This allows the possibility of providing a curvilinear sidewalk to provide more interest.

To illustrate how a collections of properties such as this might redevelop over time, the plan at lower right shows existing property lines indicated and numbered. Parcels 1 and 2 are shown as remaining single family residential as an option, because not every use will change at the same time, and no use has to change unless the owner wants it to. Parcels 3 and 4 show how two parcels taken together could provide room for an apartment building. Parking would be tight in this arrangement so parking is shown under the building as an option.

Parcel 5 shows townhomes on Clay, a more appropriate choice for this quieter street. In order to maximize space parcel 7 has been included with



*Concept for the block between Charles and Wilba, Center and Clay. Many of the uses on this block are vacant or marginal.*



Parcel 6 to allow access from either Center or Clay. If the same person or company also acquired Parcel 6, this would allow Parcel 7 to provide access for both parcels. Parking is shown under this building, as well. Parcel 7 includes screening from the substation in the upper right hand (northeast) corner of the block. Parcel 8 provides good access from



*Aerial of Blocks 9 and 10, above. The plan at lower left shows existing property lines to illustrate how development could occur over time through acquisition of one or two properties at a time. Many other configurations are possible and likely. See explanation below.*

Wilba and Center, so could accommodate a variety of uses, although probably not residential.

The Duke Energy substation in the northeast corner of this block is a visual detriment to the area around it. Since it cannot be moved, we recommend that the City work with Duke Energy to mitigate its appearance through landscaping and opaque fences. It appears that the fence lines could fairly easily be moved inward on the east and west, and the plan shows landscape screening on all sides except the north, where space is very tight (in fact the fence appears to be in the public ROW).



## 4.7 Development Between Charles and the Regional Park

There is great interest in the community in a downtown location for a YMCA. There is no set location for this use, but the plan suggests a possible location right next to the regional park entrance (purple building). This would allow the Y to access the facilities at the park, and conversely, to expand the offerings of the park through the Y. This building could also be office, private sports-related, or additional residential. Planned parking for the park is shown to the right of the entrance road near the roundabout, and for efficiency the parking for this building is shown as contiguous with that parking.

The right (east) portion of this very large block is shown as residential apartment buildings that would be more suitable for frontage on Center. The three single family residential buildings on the northeast corner are shown as remaining, but another apartment building as part of the development of the other two, or townhomes would also work here.

It is not ideal to have parking located along the north side of the block (south side of Clay), but with buildings of this size their location on Center is more logical and improves the gateway to the downtown. The effect of this parking can be minimized by setbacks to parking and by screening parking lots with hedges and trees. It might even be possible to further enhance this edge by curving the walk as on Center. Also note that an area that is currently wooded has been preserved and pathways through the area added.

All the buildings facing Center Street have been set back 5-30 feet from the ROW, which is already set back about 20' from the existing curbs. This will provide a more attractive gateway effect for vehicles entering the downtown from the west along Center, and will also allow a curving walk to be set back further from the roadway creating a safer and much more attractive route to the park.



*Development between Charles Street and the Regional Park is shown above. One possible location for a Y is shown right next to the park entrance (purple buildings: this could also be office or residential), and medium-high density residential is shown to the east (yellow buildings).*

The American Legion building is located north of Clay near this block. The building and the siting of the building surrounded by parking is not ideal for the urban design goals of the plan, but it is an important use for the community so it is shown as remaining. If the leadership of the American Legion desired, this property could probably be profitably redeveloped for townhomes which would allow relocation to a better facility in the future.

The separated bike path shown along the south side of Center Street should probably include a crosswalk for bikes to the park entry shown on the plan above. Traffic planning should be conducted to ensure bicycle safety through use of flashing lights, push-button crossing lights or other arrangements.





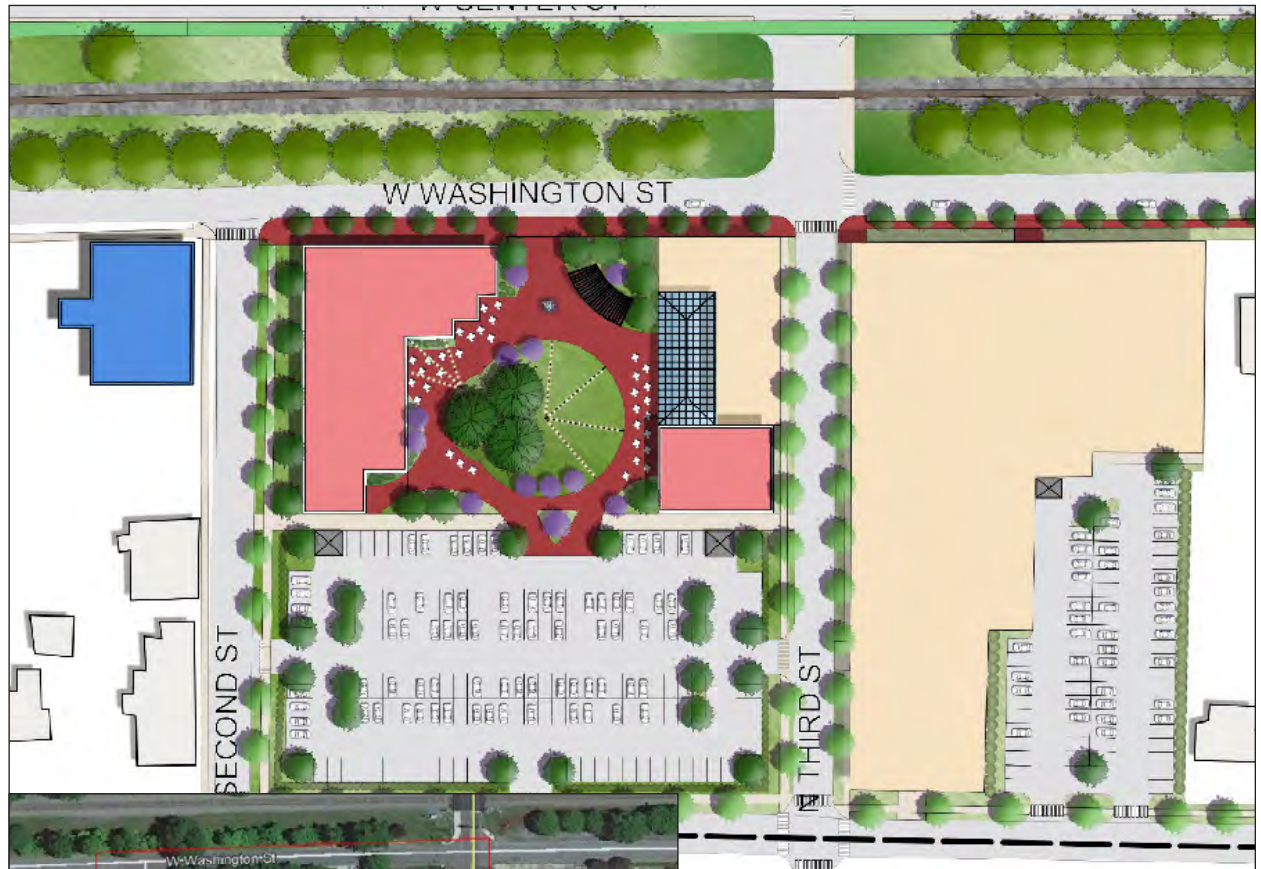
## 4.8 Development South of Washington Street

### Kingsdown Site

The plan for the Kingsdown site between Washington and Holt Streets, Third and Second is shown at right. An illustration of what this site might look like is shown on the next page. This site is mostly vacant, with a few large trees and informal gravel parking areas (existing conditions aerial shown below right). The building shown (photo below) on the upper right (northeast) section of the plan (photo below) is the only one preserved in this concept, because the other existing buildings are metal and not in good condition.

This site represents an outstanding opportunity not only for new development in the downtown, but also for attracting pedestrians from the core area north of the railroad tracks south to Washington Street. The library is a beautifully restored historic building that already attracts many visitors, and this site could encourage more visitation. See page 22 for the concept of creating this north-south link across the tracks. This concept would require a much improved pedestrian crossing at the railroad tracks as discussed in the previous section.

This site is also a good fit for residential (could be either rental or condos, depending on the market), since the industrial building to the west of the library



**Site Plan.** The site plan above shows the original building in the upper left of the plan (photo left) 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. The building on the upper left 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.



**Kingsdown Existing Conditions Aerial (above) and remaining historic building (left).** The existing historic Kingsdown building on the northeast corner of this large site is the only one likely to be saved and rehabbed, since the rest of the buildings are metal sheds. It is hoped that some of the large trees in the center of the site can be saved for the open space.





**Kingsdown Site.** This concept sketch (looking north toward the railroad tracks) illustrates the tremendous potential of this site to become a major destination and economic engine for the downtown. The new building shown on the left side of the site could be 4 stories with the bottom level being commercial, office, and/or restaurant. The existing historic building on the upper right is conceived as a restaurant, with a “back of house” catering and kitchen facility to the rear and an atrium between the two that would provide outdoor dining year-round. The library is shown to the left of the site, and the edge of the larger Kingsdown building is shown across Third to the right.



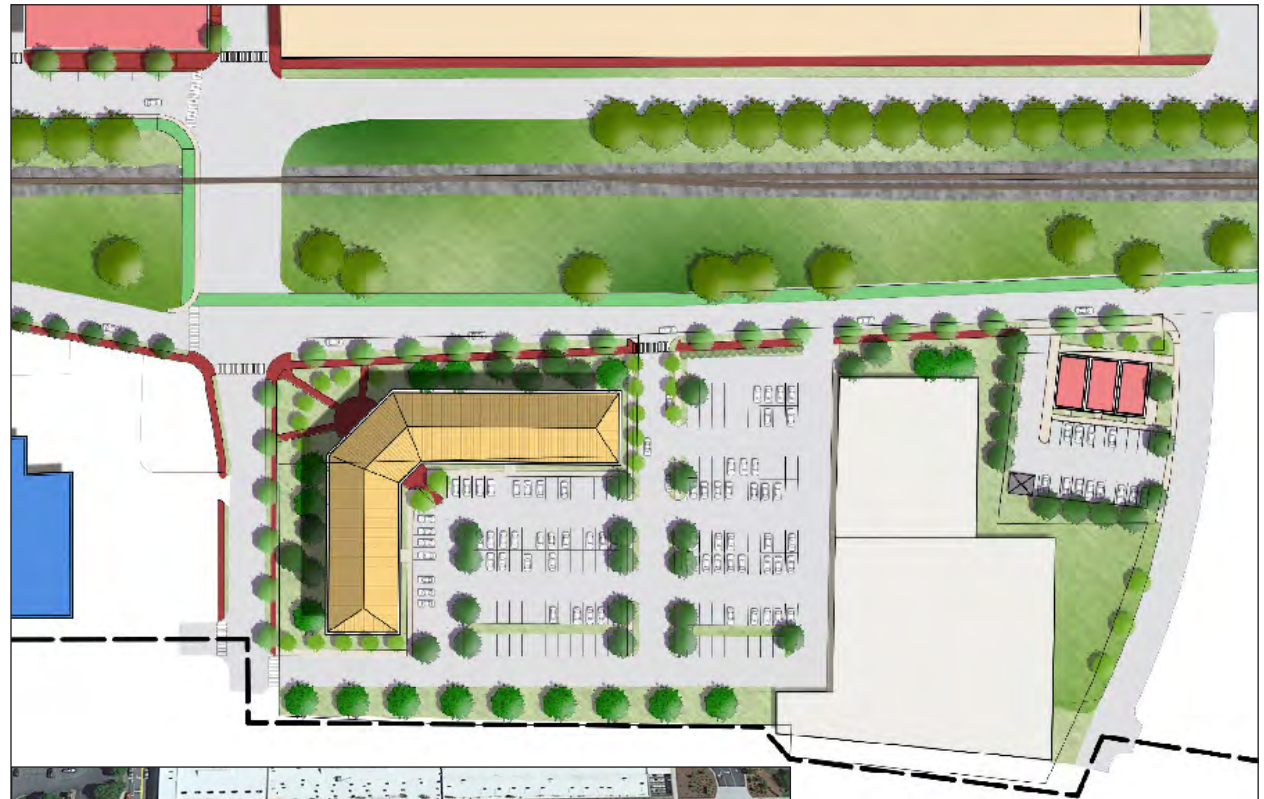
is also residential, and since attractive residential neighborhoods exist to the south. The comparable type of use to this site is (on a larger scale) Brightleaf Square in Durham (see photo next page). The Brightleaf open space is privately owned and maintained, but is open to the public during set hours. The concept for the open space between the buildings includes saving at least 2 or 3 of the large trees on the site (if possible) and building an attractive open space around them, including outdoor dining and a small stage for events. An economic analysis of the potential for this site is included in Appendix B.

### 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 high-density residential or mixed use building is shown on the northwest corner of these properties. 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.

This is an important gateway corner into the downtown for those entering along Fifth Street from the south, and the current appearance does not set a high standard for the rest of the downtown. The conceptual building is “L” shaped and set on this corner to create an architectural edge along both Fifth Street and Washington, and to improve the views from The Lofts at White Furniture to the north.

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.



*Shopping Center Site. The western portion of the site is shown as higher-density residential or mixed use. A building on this corner would significantly improve the gateway into the downtown area by adding attractive architecture and a sense of enclosure.*



## 4.9 Development Potential New Commercial & Residential

The diagram below shows the block numbers for reference, and the table on the next page 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 Y 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 commercial space (not including the 55,000 potential “Y” building) and ~620,000 square feet of residential space, or a total new development potential over 10 years of ~850,000 sf.*

At 1000 feet per unit average for residential, this yields 620 condos, townhomes, or apartments. Within this, it includes 25 new Live-Work Units with 800 sf of retail each, or a total of 20,000 sf for office, retail and service (and possibly limited restaurant), as a subset of the overall commercial total of 173,000.

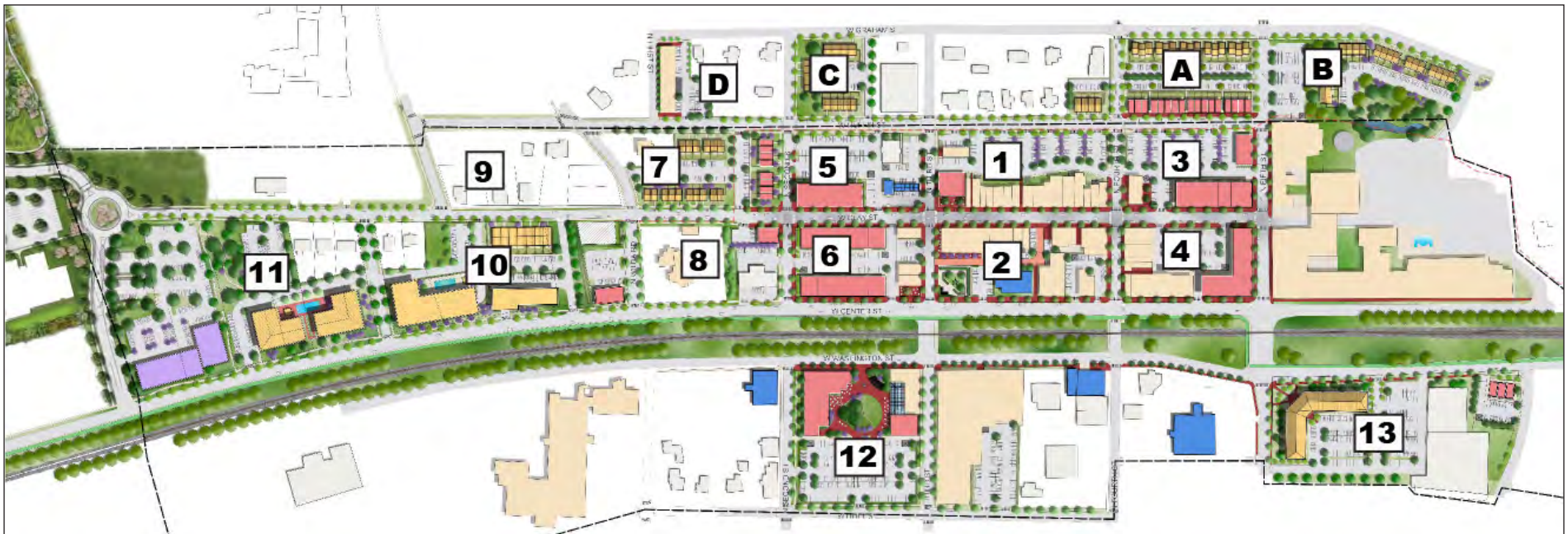
There is currently about 140,000 sf of existing or potential (historic but vacant) commercial space

in the historic downtown, and if the partially vacant shopping center is added to that, the total is 188,000 sf, 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.

### 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.

**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



*Block Numbers correspond to the table on the next page.*



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 between Fourth and Third.

### Impact of the Plan

While 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

*Right: The Table at right shows the number of square feet per block by use.*

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

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





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 scenario 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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## 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### 5.1 Getting From Here to There

Mebane has many assets on which to build a better future for its citizens, including attractive architecture in the core area, many interesting and diverse retail and restaurant businesses, the successful rehabilitation of the Lofts at White Furniture, a strong economy and a growing population. But there are also challenges, including weak gateways from the south, traffic on Center Street, and the erosion of the urban fabric further from the historic center. The best strategies to reinforce Mebane's strengths and address its challenges require building a framework for positive growth as outlined in this report and making a commitment of public funds to the most promising project(s). Such projects will have the best chance of leveraging improved image, increased visitation and citizen pride, and ultimately, more private investment.

Mebane has already made significant investments in the community and in public improvements and private investment such as the library, the Lofts at White Furniture, the new regional park and Holt Street Park, improved roads, and development near I-40. The Downtown also has many historic assets and unique businesses, but citizens and business owners commented at meetings that they felt the Downtown would benefit greatly from an improved public environment. Citizens and business owners also commented during the Vision Plan process that many residents don't often come Downtown and many visitors to the Tanger Outlets are unaware that the historic Downtown is just a few minutes drive from I-40.

Improvements to Clay Street, Center Street, and the connecting streets between them in the Downtown would represent an investment in Mebane's highest and best public asset.

Revitalization of historic Downtowns throughout North Carolina in communities large and small

has proven to be one of the most effective ways to begin revitalization not just of the Downtown, but of the community that the Downtown represents. The money invested in Downtown and particularly in streetscape projects has proven time and again to generate private investment and increased tax base many times greater than the cost of the initial public investment.

Here are a few examples:

- In New Bern (pop 27,000), ~\$500,000/block (54' ROW) x 8 blocks (\$4 million) resulted in \$260 million in private and public (State and Federal) investment. Tourism was \$12 million a year in the 80s; in 2014 tourism totaled \$130 million;
- In Goldsboro, (pop. 36,000), since planning for the first block of Downtown streetscape improvements was initiated in 2010, there have been:
  - \* 49 new businesses opened in Downtown;
  - \* 9 homes purchased for rehab that were in condemnation proceedings;
  - \* Conversion of upper floors of rehabbed commercial buildings to residential (all available apartments were rented within weeks of completion);
  - \* 15 new investors in Downtown commercial buildings and numerous rehabs either completed or in process;
  - \* After the first block of streetscape improvements to Center Street was built with City funding, the next three blocks were funded in part with a \$10 million TIGER grant, and the last two blocks (now in design development) with an additional \$5 million TIGER grant.

- \* Award of several additional grants (including a SmART grant and designation) based on community momentum;
- \* Awards: a "Great Main Streets in the Making" award from NCAPA before the streetscape was even finished; a "Best Outdoor Space Improvement" from the NC Main Street program ; and a designation at the 2017 National Main Street conference of Goldsboro as "A City to Watch."
- \* Goldsboro hosted the 2016 Main Street conference with record-breaking attendance;
- \* Goldsboro began in the 90s by creating a Downtown master plan and a neighborhood master plan, and recruiting partners such as Self-Help and Preservation NC. They also kept in constant contact with elected officials and agencies at the state and federal levels
- In Downtown Raleigh, a \$10 million investment in Raleigh's Fayetteville Street produced about \$3 billion in investment in 6 years.
- In Salisbury (population 34,000), since the 2001 master plan was adopted and they began addressing streetscape needs, they have seen over \$60 million in investment.

This section includes recommendations for:

- Streetscape and infrastructure Improvements;
- Land use considerations;
- Citizen engagement and themes;
- Possible sources of funding.

Recommendations include short, medium, and long-term strategies and responsibilities.



## 5.2 Priority Actions

The first step in implementing this Vision Plan should be for the Council to adopt it. The stakeholders in Mebane must work together to accomplish the goals of the plan. A joint working group might be formed to begin exploring grants and loans and to develop a work plan, provide needed data and economic studies, and to advocate for State and Federal grants and loans with elected officials and agency representatives. This group could also provide the impetus for Mebane to become a Main Street community. There are also a variety of smaller projects that can be initiated to build support and enthusiasm for revitalization while larger projects are being planned and funding sources identified.

Smaller projects that can be worked on starting immediately include *“tactical urbanism”* actions such as *painting the desired expanded sidewalk widths on the asphalt on Clay Street to allow people to experience what the increased space would do for pedestrians and businesses. This type of action could be either temporary (e.g. for a weekend) or semi-permanent (change street cross-section with painted lines to allow people to experience the difference over time).* Another project that was very high on the list of actions desired by the public was *funding and implementation of the Farmers Market*. Even if the public restrooms require more time for implementation because of cost, the shelter and parking lot shown in the plans in Section 4 could be implemented first.

These smaller projects will not only help to build support and generate “buzz” for the Downtown, but they will also demonstrate the City’s commitment to change, and the support of the community. The City must have “skin in the game” to improve chances of success in winning grants and loans that will be necessary to implement this program over the long term. The combination of the railroad through the center of the Downtown



*Urban townhouses, apartments over commercial, and live-work units provide new housing choices that are attractive to millennial, the creative class, and empty nesters.*

and the number and size of overhead lines represents a barrier to investment that may attract funding agencies such as the NCDOT and the Federal Transportation agency (BUILD program) to assist with this cost, but such grants are highly competitive so Cities must demonstrate initiative. There are also funds available for the implementation of bike paths.

Within the historic core, the project that is most likely to result in increased investment in the Downtown and outside funding would be to complete a major project, or a portion of a major project. We believe that project would be **at least one or two blocks of streetscape improvements on Clay Street**. With that project underway (or even in the planning stages by preparation of construction documents), the City will be much more likely to successfully apply for funds to complete a more

comprehensive streetscape improvement and implementation program.

Before improvements to Clay Street can be undertaken, there are several important steps that must first be implemented, and these steps will also help to build momentum for change. These include **relocating the overhead lines on Clay Street** (as shown on page 33) and **improving the parking area north of Clay Street** between Fourth and Third.

An example of this approach to funding implementation can be seen in Goldsboro, where the City borrowed the entire amount to pay for design and construction of the first block of Center Street while beginning the process of applying for a TIGER (now BUILD) grant. The City was passed over three times before they won \$10 million, but each time they reapplied they had additional progress

to report. Eventually they also won a second \$5 million TIGER grant because the agency was so pleased with the results of their grant. Positive change is the result of a long view, careful planning, and a positive attitude.

See the Timeline at the end of this chapter for a visual representation of actions and projects.

### 5.3 Overlay District

The creation of an overlay district to define building types and public improvements promoting a walkable Downtown should be undertaken as soon as possible. The current land use patterns of historic core and commercial strip development do not create a harmonious character for the Downtown. Citizens felt there was a need for more traditional downtown commercial space as an expansion of the Downtown, and that such expansion would help to create a critical mass that would benefit both existing and future businesses.

At the same time, most people agreed that having more residential opportunities Downtown would support the Downtown and create the opportunity for a longer cycle of activity. The commercial uses along the west end of the study area have served the area for many years, but the appearance of this corridor does not create the best entry into the Downtown from the west.

Property values near the core area are already quite high, and there are few vacancies on the ground floor of the buildings. The current (largely suburban) zoning works fine for most of the City, but in the Downtown near the community's cultural, historic, and commercial center, a denser form of development will enhance and reinforce the character and value of the Downtown as an expression of Mebane's unique sense of place.

An overlay district for the study area (exact boundary to be determined) utilizing form-based codes or design guidelines is a recommended way

to ensure a more uniform, walkable downtown over time. At present the study area is a patchwork of zoning designations that deal with the broad range of uses that exist within it. Instead, an overlay district would deal with the size and placement of the building envelope and the design of the public realm (sidewalks, connections to development, landscaping, screening, etc.). Within this framework particular building uses are flexible, and what types of housing is suitable both above commercial uses (e.g, apartments, condos or Live-Work units) and within easy walking distance. See Section 3: Concepts for more discussion of the use of an overlay district for the study area.

There are those who feel that having too many standards discourages investment, but observation of the revitalization process proves otherwise: High quality developers are unlikely to invest significant resources in a community where there is no guarantee that nearby properties will develop to the same high standards. In Danville, VA, the completion of a master plan for the Downtown was followed immediately by the creation of design guidelines for the entire area, known as the River District. The guidelines addressed both existing historic building restoration and guidelines for new buildings, landscaping, signage, and public space. In the two years following this work, the City realized \$78 million in new investment.

### 5.4 Citizen Engagement

City leadership has a crucial role to play in revitalization, but citizen engagement is equally important in order to win approval of strategies and to develop a well-rounded and nuanced "character" or theme for the Downtown area. Citizen engagement involves all age groups, many different perspectives, and many interests. Mebane has a history in recent years of encouraging citizen involvement, and this should be reinforced as the plan is implemented.



*Infrastructure improvements in Goldsboro, NC.*

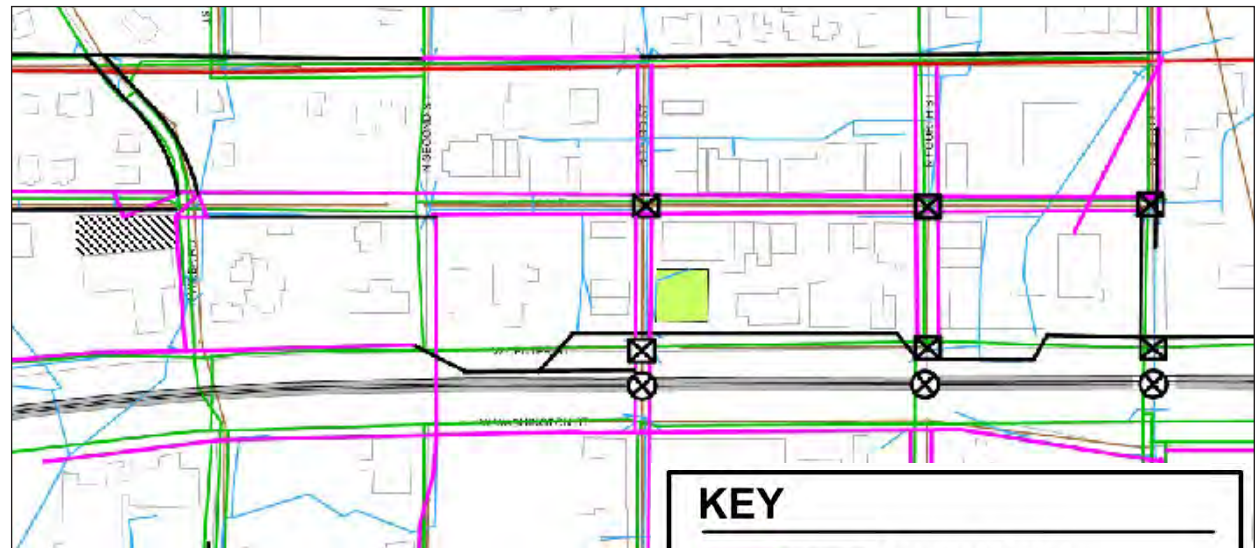


One of the best ways to encourage ongoing input into Downtown development is through the *Department of Commerce's Main Street program*. This highly successful program requires application, appointment of a full-time Downtown Manager, and the appointment of boards and committees that will help to implement the plan. The process takes at least two years to complete, so beginning this process should be a high priority.

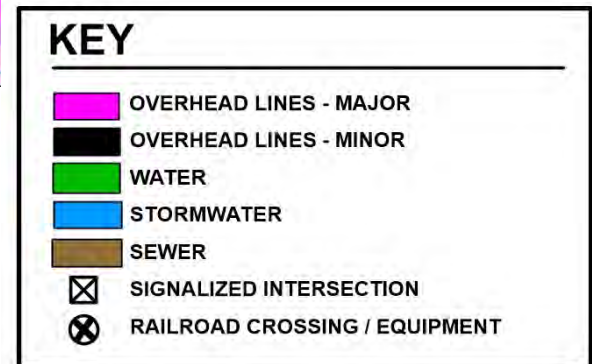
### 5.5 Streetscape Implementation

The highest priority public improvement project to begin the revitalization process should be implementation of streetscape improvements as presented in Section 4. In order for streetscape improvements to accomplish redevelopment goals, relocating or burying the overhead utilities is an essential part of that equation.

The City did a study in 2003 to assess the cost of burying the overhead lines throughout the Downtown area. At the time, the cost was approximately \$5 million, so the idea was dismissed as impractical. What has not been considered is relocating the lines, which is our recommendation. The recommended extent and location of relocation is shown in the map on page 33. The estimated cost for this relocation can be seen in Appendix A. The overhead lines are a major detraction to new development, especially on upper floors, and the lines hinder effective streetscape improvements. With 266,000 square feet of new development potential in the six blocks of the expanded core area, this cost can be more easily justified and absorbed by an increased tax base. In addition, if the utility companies understand the potential for new development, they may be more willing to negotiate price reductions for the cost of the work. Estimated costs are presented in Appendix A and are broken down first by line relocation overall cost, and then by block for other improvements.



**Core Infrastructure.** This close up of the Infrastructure map (see page \*\* for full map) shows relevant overhead and underground utilities in the core historic area, which is most likely to receive the first streetscape improvements.



Once regional overhead lines are relocated, the City will need to bury the utilities that serve the blocks from which the lines were relocated, including cable. The existing underground utilities need to be evaluated (for both current and future needs) and if needed replaced or updated. This can be done at the same time as surface improvements or beforehand.

Replacement of all utilities must be in accordance with all applicable State and Local requirements. During construction it will be critical to minimize the interruption of service to the adjacent customers. To the extent possible, the improvements should be designed so that new lines are installed and ready to be put into service prior to taking the existing lines out of service.

Without taking the initiative on some aspect of implementation (preparation of construction drawings, updating utilities, implementation of some portion of the plan, etc), it is less likely that funding agencies will provide the necessary loans or grants needed for ongoing implementation. Funding agencies have less money to distribute than in the past, so competition for available funds is greater than ever.

## Municipal Infrastructure

When considering utility improvements in the Downtown area, there would be significant cost savings if these are undertaken at the same time as surface improvements, and further, there would be less disruption of businesses nearby. The City of Mebane has completed infrastructure assessment activities in various locations across their utility infrastructure systems over the years. Data collected in these assessments, historical data available, and shared knowledge of the City's staff were used collectively to develop an understanding of current conditions.

The City's existing water and sewer systems should probably be replaced when streetscape improvements are undertaken. This could be done separately, but it doesn't make sense to approach improvements this way because separate projects would interfere twice with businesses along these streets.

Replacement cost for the terra-cotta sewer system for the three blocks of Clay Street from 5th to 2nd is estimated by the City at \$200,000-300,000. Replacement of the water system is estimated at \$150,000-200,000. Stormwater and other utility costs are estimated in Appendix A.

One potential savings would be to consider removing the stoplights on 4th and 3rd and replacing them with 4-way stop signs. This would also eliminate the need for the current overhead wires and/or their replacement with boom arms, which cost about \$200,000 or more for each one (two would be needed at each intersection).

As part of any selected improvement project it is recommended that the storm drainage needs of the project area be evaluated in detail and new infrastructure implemented to achieve proper drainage for both existing and future needs. In the interim, any efforts that the City is able to devote to identifying the location and condition of the exist-

ing storm drainage network within and contiguous to the Downtown area will be beneficial as the project moves into design.

## Project Cost Estimates

Project cost estimates are located in Appendix A. The unit costs were taken from a comparable project bid in 2014 with a \*\*% cost escalation factor added. Estimates include "soft" costs such as design, bidding, construction observation, and contingency. Prices are valid at this time, but whether they remain valid depends on market conditions at the time the project is bid. Because there has been a tremendous increase in construction in the past few years, it is a certainty that costs will rise over time absent a significant market correction.

The estimates show that the cost of one block on Clay Street with the recommended cross-section will be about \$1 million\*\*\*. The cost for one block of Center Street would be lower because the curbs and sidewalk on the north side remain the same; changes are primarily to the south side where the bike lanes are added. It is unknown at this time (without a survey) how much the crown of the road would change, so an allowance number was used.

The cost for relocating the overhead lines on Clay Street is a separate total because this cost should be averaged over all the improvements to be completed in the expanded Downtown area over the approximate 10-year time horizon of the Plan. However, the cost for burying the lines that serve Center Street only is included in the cost estimates for that street because all of the utilities are already underground except a line that feeds the street lighting.

Regarding materials for the streetscape, we have shown, and recommend, that all sidewalks be improved with pavers rather than concrete. The reasons for this are many. Brick is an historic

material that harmonizes with and complements the historic core area. Brick is also as close to a permanent surface as possible, since if it is set in sand it can be removed for trenching and replaced seamlessly. There are many examples of historic brick streets that are hundreds of years old that are still serviceable. Concrete, on the other hand, will discolor and crack, likely within 5-10 years. If the surface needs to be trenched, the color of the new concrete will never match the old concrete. Textured concrete and colored concrete likewise do not patch well. In the overall consideration of costs (i.e. adding in the cost of utility upgrades and replacement) the additional cost to upgrade to brick paving is usually only about 10%, and when considering the longevity and appearance of brick over time, the cost is lower.

Concerning overall costs, these are intimidating numbers. But considering that some of the Downtown infrastructure needs to be replaced whether or not surface improvements are undertaken, it makes sense to do both at the same time. Improving infrastructure without surface improvements would mean that property and business owners would have to endure the inconvenience and disruption of replacing the lines (perhaps several times if all the underground utilities were not replaced at one time) without the benefits that will accrue from redesigned streets.

If budgeting requires phasing of improvements, each phase should include both utility replacement and surface improvements. Probably the most cost effective phasing would include Fourth to Second or Fifth to Second on Clay Street as phase one, Center Street improvements as phase 2, and the connecting streets as an additional phase if cost makes this necessary.



## 5.6 Possible Funding Sources

### Actions to Help Generate Funding

As the economy has improved in the past decade, an increasing number of communities are chasing a decreasing number and size of available funds. Because of this, it is more important than ever that the City take actions that will demonstrate to State and Federal agencies and private funding organizations that Downtown revitalization has public support, includes forward-thinking design elements, and has the financial commitment of the City to pay for a portion of the cost. Here are some of the strategies employed by other cities that have been successful in winning state and federal dollars for planning work and construction projects (some of which the City is already doing):

- At least yearly contact with funding agencies and elected representatives at the state and federal level to demonstrate commitment and share goals;
- Invest in a Downtown/Main Street Coordinator position to focus on leveraging municipal resources with external funds and resources. Such a person can be invaluable in rallying support and applying for grants.
- Partial implementation with local funds of “starter” projects or self-funding for smaller projects (e.g. Farmers Market, parking improvements, exploration of moving the overhead utility lines, completed construction documents). Funding can come from loans, bonds, and other funding strategies such as establishment of Municipal Service Districts or Business Improvement Districts, Impact Alamance and the New Leaf Foundation;
- Documentation of a public process for input on setting goals and developing plans (e.g. this plan);
- Willingness to contribute more than the minimum share of costs if specified in the grant (e.g. offering to fund 25% matching instead of the required 20%);
- So-called “shovel-ready” plans;
- \* Active programs to identify other funding sources for parts of the project or for other projects. Examples might include winning an arts grant to help pay for an outdoor stage, setting up an MSD, or becoming a Main Street community;
- Tactical urbanism actions such as painting the desired expanded sidewalk widths on the asphalt on Clay Street to allow people to experience what the increased space would do for pedestrians and businesses. This type of action could be either temporary (e.g. for a weekend) or semi-permanent (change street cross-section with painted lines to allow people to experience the difference over time);
- Work with local property owners to make vacant building space available for artists for free or at a reduced cost for a fixed time period to entice additional creative class people to consider Mebane as a permanent location;
- Active economic development strategies to help existing Downtown business owners and attract new businesses (e.g. facade grants, publicity programs, Downtown marketing, additional events throughout the year);
- Organized visits by citizens, business owners, elected officials and staff to other communities in the region that are further along in the redevelopment process to garner ideas and inspiration and to engender the determined optimism necessary for success;
- Active promotion of all positive actions and projects and all accomplishments, including press releases to local media, funding agen-

cies and elected representatives.

### Possible Funding Sources

Here are some of the possible funding sources that may aid Mebane in reaching its goals:

- **Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Discretionary Grant Program.** This program is a replacement for the TIGER grants. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018 appropriated \$1.5 billion available for National Infrastructure Investments. The grants are very popular with cities and towns because they allow the communities themselves to define the project they want funded within the umbrella of transportation improvements. Funds for the BUILD program are awarded on a competitive basis for projects that will have a significant impact on the nation, a metropolitan area or a region. The minimum local match for most TIGER grants is 20%, although in some cases of rural areas this may be reduced.
  - This last round placed more emphasis on rural communities over urban locations. It is unclear if Mebane would qualify as a rural community.
  - Applying for BUILD Discretionary Grants would require a major commitment and the participation and/or support of the City, County and COG. Mebane meets many of the criteria set up by the program as long as the effort is competitive and the groundwork has been completed.
- **Bicycle & Pedestrian Implementation Funds.** There are a number of programs that help fund bicycle and pedestrian improvements including:
  - **Transportation Alternatives.** This is the main program that funds trails and other

bicycle and pedestrian projects across the country. This competitive reimbursement program includes most activities eligible under the historically funded Transportation Enhancements program, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program.

- The **BUILD** grants include bike and pedestrian improvements in their program.
- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ)**. This program provides funds to state DOTs, MPOs and other sponsors to fund projects that will contribute to air quality improvements in ozone, carbon monoxide and/or particulate matter, and provide congestion relief.
- **Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)**. This program provides flexible funds to states for projects to improve federal-aid highways (most roads), bridges and tunnels, walking and biking infrastructure, and transit capital projects.
- Programs such as the **Highway Safety Improvement Program** can also support funding for trails, walking and biking.
- **NCDOT Contingency Fund**. The Statewide Contingency Fund is a \$10 million fund administered by the Secretary of Transportation. The Division Engineer elicits written requests from municipalities, counties, businesses, schools, citizens, legislative members and NCDOT staff. The appeals are reviewed on their merits by the Contingency and Small Urban Funds Committee, which makes recommendations for funding to the Secretary. Written requests must provide technical information such as justification, location,

improvements being requested, timing, etc., for thorough review.

- **Department of Commerce Programs**. The Rural Development division of the State Commerce Department has programs to assist rural communities. Some of their best known programs are the **Main Street and Small City Main Street** programs, but communities must apply and be designated for assistance to be applicable. Programs applicable to Mebane include:
  - **The Rural Grants Program** provides building renovation and economic infrastructure grants for job creation;
  - **The Community Development Block Grant Program for Economic Development (CDBG-ED)** provides grants to local governments that partner with a private business to bring public infrastructure improvements and building renovation services to communities;
  - **The Industrial Development Fund/Utility Fund** provides grants to units of local government for public infrastructure in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties to assist in job creation.
  - **Building Reuse Grants**. The Building Reuse Program, under the Rural Grants/Programs Section of the North Carolina Department of Commerce, will provide grants to local governments. Three categories of funding are available for 1) the renovation of vacant buildings [*this might be the most useful for Mebane Downtown*], 2) the renovation or expansion of a building occupied by an existing North Carolina company wishing to expand in their current location and 3) the renovation, expansion or construction of health care entities that will lead

to the creation of new, full-time jobs. The rural planning division is lead by Darren Rhodes, who assisted the City with public input for this study.

- **NCDOT Small Construction Funds**. Each of the 14 NCDOT Highway Divisions administers a portion of an overall amount of small construction funds allocated to the entire state.. The purpose of these funds is to finance improvements on the State System (US, NC, and SR routes) to be used for projects anywhere in the counties. These funds are used to fund a variety of transportation projects for municipalities, counties, businesses, schools, and industries throughout the state. There is a \$250,000 maximum amount per request per fiscal year. Any project with a total cost greater than \$150,000 requires a resolution or a letter of support for the project from the local jurisdiction.
- **State Water Infrastructure Funds**. These funds are administered by the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ). The programs provide funding for eligible infrastructure (CDBG-I) grants and loans for water (DWSRF) and sewer (CWSRF) projects including the replacement of existing facilities. The State Revolving Funds are generally loans at one-half of market interest rates for a maximum of 20 years. In the past these programs have had 0% interest loans and a limited amount of principal forgiveness.

## 5.7 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. See also timeline at the end of this section.

## 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 (e.g. funding for the separated bike lanes on Center), 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 ap-

ply 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.



## 5.8 Mebane's Future & Impact of the 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.

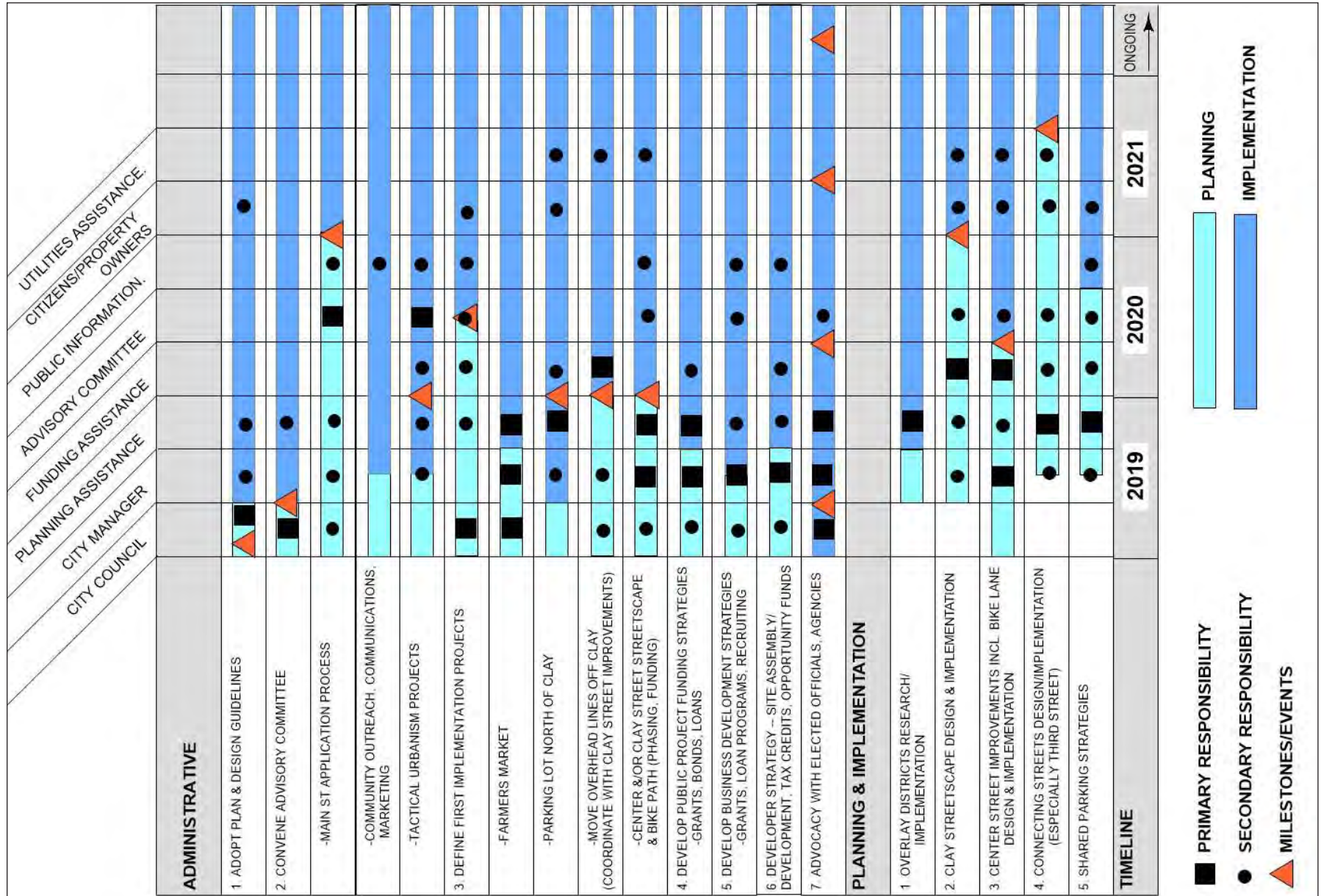
The Vision Plan illustrates the potential for nearly 850,000 square feet of new residential and commercial uses. Using modest estimates, this scenario could provide space for 1,200 new residents

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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### 5.9 Implementation Timeline and Responsibilities





## APPENDIX A: PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT COST ESTIMATES

### A1. Introduction & Assumptions

#### Assumptions & Logistics

Cost estimates were developed for the block of Clay Street between 4th and 3rd, including one intersection and about 10-20 feet back on the side streets (to allow for curb radii, ramps and crosswalks, burying overhead lines and pavement transitions). This will be the most expensive block to rehab, but it will also be the most important in terms of elevating the profile of the downtown. Once we arrived at a cost for this block, the square foot costs were extrapolated to other blocks. The blocks on either side of the core block are shorter (~420' vs. ~550') so this influences the cost for those blocks positively. Side streets are approximately the same width, and so the same square foot costs were used. Although blocks outside of the block from which costs were generated may be less expensive because there are fewer utility hookups and existing businesses to work around, using the same square foot costs helps to buffer the effect of price increases over time.

An important cost for all these blocks will be moving the regional overhead electric, phone, and cable lines off Clay Street north to Ruffin Street as shown on page 33. The cost for moving these lines is estimated at \_\_\_\_\_. Although the cost for this would be a one-time cost, the benefits will accrue to all the blocks affected as they are improved.

There will still be a need to bury the utilities that service buildings along Clay Street, and those costs are included in the typical square foot costs. Local services can remain on overhead lines along Clay Street until construction on improvements begins on each block.

Costs were not calculated for potential improvements to Center Street because the design is not sufficiently developed to allow accurate cost estimating (e.g. will the existing sidewalk remain and what will be the design for the separated bike lane). With the addition of a separated bike lane, there will probably need to be some demolition and reconstruction of the road bed within the core area to accommodate a new crown for the road. It is also possible that NCDOT and other agencies may be willing to contribute to this project because of the bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements.

#### Potential Cost Saving Strategies

The larger the area that is rehabbed at one time, the more will be saved on construction costs and the less adjacent property and business owners will be inconvenienced. Mobilization, traffic control, and construction coordination are all required for each phase, and these costs are significant.

Design fees can be minimized by contracting the preparation of construction documents for a larger area, and then phasing the work as funding allows. A significant portion of surveying costs is staging people and equipment, so once they are there preparing the survey for a larger area is cost effective. Similarly, once the design for utilities and surface improvements has been generated and approved, many of the design details remain the same from block to block, so planning for a larger area is more cost effective.

In Goldsboro the first block was planned by itself because the City borrowed the money to complete the work, and because the City wanted a “shakedown cruise” to gauge costs, unexpected developments (e.g. underground tanks or other surprises common in historic downtowns), and projected timelines. After this first block, design began on two more blocks and, once a TIGER grant was secured, a third block was added. The City is now working on an adjacent park and the final two blocks of the project. Phases 1 and 2 took five years, and with the completion of Phase 3 projected for the end of 2019, the total time required was 7 years.

After the overhead lines are removed as shown on page 33, it may be possible to identify outside sources of funding to move or bury additional overhead lines over time, because the appearance of these lines may be a significant deterrent to new development. On the other hand, in places where the overhead lines are not as significant, such as along Center Street, it is likely that the cost of burying the lines can easily be accommodated when other improvements are made, such as the addition of bike paths or the addition of new development requiring less driveways and continuous sidewalks between the core area and the regional park.

The cost estimates for the block of Clay Street between 4th and 3rd are on the next two pages, followed by the estimates for the other blocks in the historic core area.



**ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE PROJECT COST**  
**Downtown Streetscape**  
**West Clay Street Improvements (Between 3rd & 4th Street)**  
**Mebane, North Carolina**  
**RIVERS & ASSOCIATES, INC.      Date: November, 2018**

	DESCRIPTION	UNITS	TOTAL QUANTITY	UNIT COST	EXTENDED COST
	<b>Administration</b>				
1	Mobilization	LS	1	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00
2	Construction Staking	LS	1	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
3	Traffic Control & Temporary Measures	LS	1	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00
4	Construction Coordination	LS	1	\$24,000.00	\$24,000.00
	<b>Demolition</b>				
5	Remove Fire Hydrant Assembly	EA	3	\$700.00	\$2,100.00
6	Remove Water Meter Service	EA	35	\$500.00	\$17,500.00
7	Remove Existing Sewer Service Lines	LF	560	\$10.00	\$5,600.00
8	Remove Existing Sanitary Sewer Manholes	EA	1	\$900.00	\$900.00
9	Remove Ex. Curb and Gutter	LF	1,070	\$5.00	\$5,350.00
10	Remove Asphalt Pavement	SY	2,750	\$9.00	\$24,750.00
11	Remove Existing Sidewalk	SY	1,211	\$10.00	\$12,110.00
	<b>Water Distribution System</b>				
12	Fire Hydrants	EA	3	\$5,000.00	\$15,000.00
13	Public Works Estimate of Water Replacement Cost	EA	1	\$77,600.00	\$77,600.00
14	New Water Meter Service	EA	35	\$1,400.00	\$49,000.00
15	Water Service Line	LF	1,050	\$5.00	\$5,250.00
16					
	<b>Wastewater Collection System</b>				
17					
18	New 4' ID Sanitary Sewer Manhole 10 to 12'	EA	1	\$6,100.00	\$6,100.00
19	Public Works Estimate of Sewer Replacement Cost	EA	1	\$116,400.00	\$116,400.00
20	Sanitary Sewer Cleanouts	EA	1	\$900.00	\$900.00
21	Connect Existing Sewer Line	EA	2	\$2,500.00	\$5,000.00
	<b>Roadway &amp; Drainage</b>				
22	Pre-Cast Drop Inlet including Frame & Grate	EA	4	\$3,000.00	\$12,000.00
23	New Storm Manhole Depth 8-10'	EA	1	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00
24	8" CABC Base Course	SY	2,156	\$10.50	\$22,638.00
25	6" Curb and Gutter	LF	1,070	\$27.00	\$28,890.00
26	Concrete Driveway Turnout	SY	340	\$25.00	\$8,500.00
27	1 1/2" Asphalt Overlay	SF	2,156	\$20.00	\$43,120.00
28	Thermoplastic Pavement Marking (Allowance)	LS	1	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00

	<b>Erosion Control</b>				
29	Erosion and Sedimentation Control	LS	1	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00
	<b>Electrical, Phone &amp; Cable</b>				
30	Underground conduit (lights and power)	LF	1,120	\$45.00	\$50,400.00
31	Underground conduit (phone and cable)	LF	1,121	\$55.00	\$61,655.00
	<b>Streetscape Surface Improvements</b>				
32	Brick Pavers on 3/4" Sand Setting Bed	SF	13,000	\$10.00	\$130,000.00
33	4' Unreinforced Concrete Base	SF	13,000	\$4.00	\$52,000.00
34	Concrete Bands, Tree Collars	LF	340	\$20.00	\$6,800.00
35	Concrete Band at R/W (allowance)	LF	1,100	\$22.00	\$24,200.00
36	6" Reinforced Concrete Driveway	SF	3,500	\$8.00	\$28,000.00
37	Truncated Dome Pavers at Handicap Ramps	SF	2,000	\$20.00	\$40,000.00
	<b>Landscaping</b>				
38	3" Caliper Trees Installed in Tree Pits	EA	20	\$400.00	\$8,000.00
39	Stalite 6' x 3' x 950'	CY	330	\$76.00	\$25,080.00
40	Prepared Topsoil for Tree Pits	CY	60	\$60.00	\$3,600.00
41	Double Shredded Harwood Mulch	CY	17	\$60.00	\$1,020.00
42	Perennials and Annuals	LS	0	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
43	Irrigation	LS	1	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00
44	French Drains- 4" Perforated PVC Pipe in Sleeve, in Fabric Wrapped Stone	LF	1,100	\$10.00	\$11,000.00
	<b>Lights and Furniture</b>				
45	Street Lights on Concrete Base	EA	4	\$3,000.00	\$12,000.00
46	Street Lights on Concrete Base Installation	EA	4	\$2,200.00	\$8,800.00
47	PED Lights on Concrete Base	EA	16	\$3,000.00	\$48,000.00
48	PED Lights on Concrete Base Installation	EA	16	\$1,600.00	\$25,600.00
49	Benches	EA	4	\$1,400.00	\$5,600.00
50	Bike Bollards	EA	6	\$500.00	\$3,000.00
51	Concrete Footers for Signs and Bike Racks	EA	16	\$300.00	\$4,800.00
52	Signs Allowance 10 per block	EA	10	\$800.00	\$8,000.00
53	Low Voltage Lighting, 39 Lights, 2 Transformers, Cable/Conduit	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00
54	Trash Receptacles	EA	5	\$800.00	\$4,000.00

Construction Sub-Total	(\$1,203,763.00)
Construction Contingency - 10%	(\$120,376.30)
Engineering:	
Design, Permitting, CA,CO - 10%	(\$120,376.30)
<b>Total Estimated Project Cost</b>	<b>(\$1,444,515.60)</b>



### Cost Estimates

Cost Estimates for Clay Street between 4th and 3rd are **\$1,444,515.00**. This includes design, construction, and construction observation, and a price contingency of 10%. This does include underground utilities to service the buildings on Clay Street, but does not include the cost of moving the regional overhead lines. Divided into a linear-foot cost (550'), this is ~\$2626 per linear foot.

Based on these prices, the following would be costs for additional streets:

• Clay Street between 5th and 4th (430' block):	<b>\$1,129,200.00</b>
• Clay Street between 3rd and 2nd (415' block):	<b>\$1,089,800.00</b>
• 5th for one block north and south of Clay Street (510' 2 blocks): This block is discounted 20% because there are minimal above ground utilities, narrower sidewalks and narrower right of way:	<b>\$1,071,400.00</b>
• 4th from the driveway to the proposed parking lot south past Clay Street to Center Street (380'):	<b>\$979,800.00</b>
• 3rd from the north edge of the proposed Farmers Market south to Washington (380')	<b>\$979,800.00</b>
<b>Total for all work:</b>	<b>\$6,694,500.00</b>

Actual costs for these streets will vary based on whether they are done together or separately and when they are done. Prices for construction at present are high because of the high volume of work in the state and corresponding demand for materials and labor.

Regarding the question of whether brick or other unit pavers is worth the cost, a calculation of the difference in cost of brick vs. concrete sidewalks was done for the block of Clay between 4th and 3rd. If you remove the cost of brick with a concrete underlayment from the chart on the previous pages (\$130,000 for brick and \$52,000 for a concrete bed), then add the cost of reinforced concrete sidewalks in the same area (\$104,000), the savings is about \$78,000, or less than 10% (.94) of the cost. Given that brick can be removed and replaced seamlessly and will last 50 years or more, this is a good investment for the City.

The total for all these blocks is ~\$6,694,500. The potential value of the development in the entire study area over ten years is \$90 million, and in the core area (176,000 sf of new residential and commercial development) is \$18,480,000. This calculation is only for property value, and does not include increased tourism and increased sales tax. This also does not include the increase in value from rehab of historic buildings and increase in occupancy on upper floors of these buildings. Refer to Section 5, page 52 for examples of the value of downtown revitalization.

## APPENDIX B: PROJECT FEASIBILITY & ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSES



*Examples of Townhomes, Traditional on top, and more modern/urban above.*

### B1. Introduction

This section evaluates three concepts or scenarios for enhancing the downtown area in terms of new or renovated space providing additional residential units, commercial space, and other amenities. The purpose of this analysis is to better inform decision-makers, whether they are public officials prioritizing new downtown investments or private investors evaluating the soundness of a new venture in downtown Mebane. In addition to project feasibility, these analyses illustrate the potential property tax benefits from new development that would accrue to the City of Mebane and Alamance County.

Throughout this work, we strive to use assumptions that reflect realistic market conditions, costs, and rents. In addition to the three main concepts that are evaluated, short summaries of two other downtown amenity ideas are included.

Overall, the Vision Plan for downtown Mebane illustrates the potential for nearly 850,000 square feet of new space in a mixture of apartments, townhomes, mixed-use buildings, and live-work units. Using a moderate construction cost estimate of \$100 to \$110 per square foot, this would represent over \$90 million in new investment in downtown Mebane. If this new development was spread out over a ten-year period, the approximate new property tax revenue benefit for the City of Mebane would be \$2.6 million over ten years, with a total tax revenue benefit to Mebane and Alamance County of \$6 million.

### B2. Downtown Townhomes And Live-Work Units

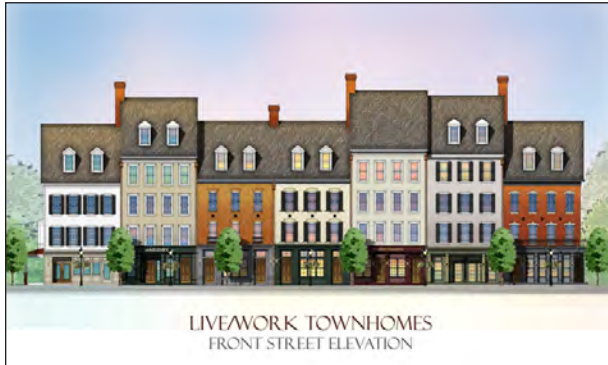
One concept for adding additional residents and businesses to the downtown area is an infill project of new townhomes and “live-work” units, as shown at left. Live-work units combine living space and business space in the same unit. The concept design shows the potential for 15 townhomes and 17 live-work units occupying a typical city block of about 2.26 acres.

### Market Demand

Demographics and market conditions in Mebane show good demand for both residential and business space. Mebane’s strong population growth and relatively affluent population support additional development of both types of spaces.

The housing market in 2018 is tight throughout the entire Triangle region, with limited supply and high demand. May 2018 residential market data in the Triangle shows that properties averaged only 25 days on the market before selling, and were selling at nearly 100 percent of asking price. Total inventory has only a 2.5 months’ supply, when a supply of 5 or 6 months is average.





**Live-Work Units.** (above) shows a possible configuration for these types of units. Below is the site plan from which the figures in this section were calculated. It includes 15 townhomes on the north (top) side of the block and 17 Live-Work units on the south side.



Trends within Mebane are similar, with available residential properties having a supply of approximately 2 months. A review of listings in June 2018 showed only 5 townhomes on the market throughout Mebane, including both new construction and resale of older townhomes.

In addition, Mebane’s market has been cited for a lack of diversity of housing options, being dominated by single-family detached homes and rental apartments. A recent increase in single-level patio home and townhome construction is seen as an improvement in housing choice. Interviews with townhome builders in Mebane and neighboring communities indicate strong demand for their products. Offering low-maintenance townhome living in the downtown area would likely be attractive particularly to empty-nesters as well as young couples.

Conditions for commercial space are also good, with vacancy of less than 10 percent in the downtown area. The large percentage of out-commuters leaving Mebane for work elsewhere presents an opportunity to attract more existing residents to stay within the city for work. The “live-work” space concept – usually with living space upstairs and business space downstairs in the same unit – originally appealed to artists looking for a simple, affordable place to combine their residence and work. But in addition to artists and musicians, a small ground-floor work space in a visible downtown location could appeal to a variety of service providers, such as insurance agents and financial advisors, as well as most any start-up or sole proprietor enterprise.

**Project Overview:**

The design concept calls for 15 two-story townhomes of 1,400 square feet each on the north (top) side of the block. On the south side of the block are 17 three-story live-work units of 2,400 square feet each. Surface parking behind the units is proposed. The site occupies a typical city block of 2.26 acres. The concept plan suggests the block bounded by Fourth, Fifth, Clay and Ruffin streets. Other potential sites can be found on the west side of downtown along Clay, Ruffin, or Center streets; and possibly on the south side of the downtown area.

**Assumptions:**

Site cost:	\$500,000
Engineering, plans, approvals:	\$50,000
Townhome construction cost per SF:	\$103.00
Townhome sales price per SF:	\$138.00
Live-work unit construction cost per SF:	\$98.00
Live-work unit sales price per SF:	\$133.00
Annual inflation factor:	\$3.00%

**Development Economics:**

Based on these assumptions and a four-year project period (including one year for engineering, plan design, submittal, and approvals), the project looks promising from a development perspective, creating more than \$1.4 million in net income. The projected internal rate of return is greater than 30 percent. A feasibility summary is on the following page.

<b>TOWNHOME and LIVE-WORK UNIT DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY</b>				
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
<b>Development Costs</b>				
Townhome units constructed		7	8	
Townhome construction cost		\$1,039,682.00	\$1,223,854.24	
Live-Work units constructed		8	9	
Live-Work construction cost		\$1,938,048.00	\$2,245,713.12	
Site purchase	\$500,000			
Engineering, plans, approvals	\$50,000			
<b>Total annual development cost</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>	<b>\$2,977,730.00</b>	<b>\$3,469,567.36</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Unit Sales and Revenue</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
Townhome units sold		4	6	5
Townhome sales revenue		\$795,984.00	\$1,229,795.28	\$1,055,574.28
Live-Work units sold		5	6	6
Live-Work sales revenue		\$1,643,880.00	\$2,031,835.68	\$2,092,790.75
Total sales revenue		\$2,439,864.00	\$3,261,630.96	\$3,148,365.03
Cost of sales		\$121,993.20	\$163,081.55	\$157,418.25
<b>Net sales revenue</b>		<b>\$2,317,870.80</b>	<b>\$3,098,549.41</b>	<b>\$2,990,946.78</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
Net sales revenue		\$2,317,870.80	\$3,098,549.41	\$2,990,946.78
Total development cost	\$550,000	\$2,977,730.00	\$3,469,567.36	0
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>(\$550,000)</b>	<b>(\$659,859.20)</b>	<b>(\$371,017.95)</b>	<b>\$2,990,946.78</b>
<b>TOTAL NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$1,410,070.00</b>			

A caveat to the development summary numbers relates to the land purchase price. For undeveloped land or a site with vacant buildings in poor condition, the estimated purchase price (in excess of \$5.00 per square foot) is within market ranges. However, obtaining a site with



existing buildings occupied and/or in good condition could result in a significantly higher purchase price, which would drive down net income and the rate of return. Any developer will need to carefully explore their options to obtain a site that is affordable enough to provide a market rate of return for this infill project. Entering into a joint venture with an existing land owner might be an attractive option.

**Property Tax Impact:**

An infill development such as this would significantly impact property tax revenue for the City of Mebane as well as for Alamance County. Using the set of assumptions below, over the first ten years the improvements on the one-block development would add \$287,000 to city tax revenues and over \$360,500 to county revenues, for a total impact of more than \$647,000.

**Assumptions:**

- City of Mebane tax rate: \$0.4700 per \$100 valuation, unchanged over the period
- Alamance County tax rate: \$0.5900 per \$100 valuation, unchanged over the period
- Assessed value of improvements: Assessed at 100 percent of construction cost
- Annual increase in property values: 3.00%

TOWNHOME and LIVE-WORK UNIT TAX REVENUE IMPACT						
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
<b>New Tax Revenues:</b>						
Inflation		1.00	1.03	1.06	1.09	
Value of improvements added		\$2,977,730.00	\$3,469,567.36			
Total value with inflation		\$2,977,730.00	\$6,536,629.26	\$6,732,728.14	\$6,934,709.98	
City of Mebane new tax revenue		\$13,995.33	\$30,722.16	\$31,643.82	\$32,593.14	
Alamance County new tax revenue		\$17,568.61	\$38,566.11	\$39,723.10	\$40,914.79	
Total new tax revenue		\$31,563.94	\$69,288.27	\$71,366.92	\$73,507.93	
	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	<b>TOTAL</b>
	1.13	1.16	1.19	1.23	1.27	
	\$7,142,751.28	\$7,357,033.82	\$7,577,744.83	\$7,805,077.18	\$8,039,229.49	
City of Mebane	\$33,570.93	\$34,578.06	\$35,615.40	\$36,683.86	\$37,784.38	<b>\$287,187.08</b>
Alamance County	\$42,142.23	\$43,406.50	\$44,708.69	\$46,049.96	\$47,431.45	<b>\$360,511.44</b>
Total	\$75,713.16	\$77,984.56	\$80,324.10	\$82,733.82	\$85,215.83	<b>\$647,698.52</b>

### Summary of Project Feasibility and Economic Impact:

Based on currently strong market conditions, an infill development with townhomes and live-work units would be in demand and would fill a niche that is presently unmet in the downtown or the greater Mebane area. Live-work units are a relatively new idea, particularly outside of major cities in the U.S., but at this small scale would offer a new way to attract creative small business people without great risk. Based on market conditions at the time of development, a developer could choose to convert more units to townhomes, further reducing risk.

After a 4-year construction and sales period, the development would show net income of more than \$1.4 million and an internal rate of return of over 30 percent. Of course, this could be impacted by changing market conditions, as well as the purchase price of suitable sites in the downtown area.

For local governments, the new improvements could provide additional, combined city and county revenues of more than \$647,000 over the first ten years. The City of Mebane's property tax revenues would benefit by \$287,000.

For downtown Mebane, the initial fiscal benefit would be a construction project investment of nearly \$7 million. Longer term, a positive economic impact should be felt by having more residents within walking distance of downtown shops and amenities, as well as creative new space suitable for artists, service businesses, and other small business people. Given the long-term positive growth trends for the city, an opportunity to grow the critical mass of downtown by converting an underused or vacant site to a higher-value combination of uses will enhance downtown Mebane's position as a center of economic and social activity for the entire community.





### B3. Downtown Mixed-Use Development Concept

A second infill development concept for the downtown area is construction of a new “mixed-use” building of three or four stories, as shown in Figure \_\_\_\_\_, providing a mix of residential and commercial space. This concept envisions a ground floor offering leasable space for retail, restaurants and bars, and services such as spas, salons, insurance and financial services. The upper floors would have apartments for rent (though offering condominiums for sale could be considered as well.) With surface parking, the development would occupy an existing city block.

#### Market Demand:

When downtowns such as Mebane were originally built, this mix of uses in one building was common. More recently, this type of development has been absent from Mebane. However, its success has been proven across the region in recent years, and the types of uses contained – apartments and commercial space – both enjoy strong fundamental market conditions.

Despite the high volume of new apartment construction across the region, absorption of new units has kept pace. In April 2018, Forbes reported that job growth in the Research Triangle region has equaled the percentage increase in apartment units. Forbes reported a moderately low apartment vacancy rate of 5.5 percent, in line with other sources indicating vacancy between 5 percent and 6 percent. Thus, there is no indication of market oversupply at this time.

In downtown Mebane, the only significant apartment offerings are the market-rate Lofts at White Furniture and the affordably-priced Mebane Mills Lofts. Both developments are renovations of historic industrial properties. Each complex reports very low vacancy in keeping with regional trends. Asking rents at White Furniture average around \$15.00 per square foot per year. Outside of the downtown, new apartment units are priced slightly lower.

For commercial space, downtown Mebane enjoys a vacancy rate of less than 10 percent, in line with regional vacancy rates. In a downtown area that has seen very little new commercial construction in recent decades, having new commercial space (offering flexible sizes) in a mixed-use setting could be attractive for a variety of users. Developers with mixed-use experience in the region report that demand is lower for traditional retail (like women’s or men’s apparel and shoes), and greater for food, beverage and entertainment as well as for services such as day spas, nail and hair salons, insurance and financial services. This is in keeping with the evolution of downtowns across North Carolina and the United States.



**Examples of Mixed-Use Buildings:**

**Project Overview:**

The design concept envisions a new building of three or four stories, an atrium space, and the reuse of a small, historic Kingsdown building. Parking would be accommodated by surface spaces on-site. This design considers redevelopment of the block between the historic Kingsdown main factory building and the Mebane public library – the block bounded by Washington, Third, Second, and Holt streets. This property is just one example of potential mixed-use development or redevelopment sites. Other site possibilities exist in the downtown area.

Depending on a new building of either three or four stories, the project’s estimated scope is as follows:

	<b>New 3-Story Building</b>	<b>New 4-Story Building</b>
Total Project Size:	72,840 square feet	89,340 square feet
New Building Sq Ft	58,340 sq ft	74,840 sq ft
Renovated Building Sq Ft	14,500 sq ft	14,500 sq ft
Apartment Total Sq Ft for Rent (subtracting common area)	29,700 sq ft	44,550 sq ft
Commercial Total Sq Ft for Lease (subtracting common area)	36,420 sq ft	36,420 sq ft

Commercial space would be created on the first floor of the new building, as well as in the renovated buildings which are a combination of one-story and two-story structures. The ground floor of the existing buildings might be restaurant or entertainment space, while the second floor could be event/banquet or entertainment space. A small new building (replacing a low-quality structure) behind the existing two-story building is proposed as a possible commercial kitchen and storage space to serve a restaurant. All upper floors of the new building would be apartments for lease. Based on common apartment sizes in the area, 30 to 60 new apartment units could be created.



**Other Project Assumptions:**

Site size:	3.4 acres
Site cost:	\$1,000,000
Engineering, plans, approvals:	\$100,000
Apartment construction cost per sq ft:	\$125.00
Commercial construction cost per sq ft:	\$125.00
Renovated space construction cost per sq ft:	\$75.00
Apartment annual rent per sq ft:	\$15.50
Commercial annual rent per sq ft:	\$17.50
Operation expenses as percentage of revenues:	30.00%
Sale price in Year 10 as percentage of net income:	8.00% capitalization rate
Annual inflation factor:	3.00%

Regional mixed-use developers suggested construction costs that are higher than for single-use buildings and those less than three stories, due to a) building code issues involved with multiple uses in one building and b) the need for elevators.

**Development Economics:**

Based on the project scope and assumptions described above, over a 10-year period the project, at a 5 percent discount rate, yields a net present value of \$1.5 million for the three-story option and \$2.0 million for the four-story option. The internal rate of return is modest, between 7.4 percent and 7.6 percent. Because this rate of return is likely not high enough to attract financial backers, possibilities for enhancing the return are discussed later under Summary of Project Feasibility and Economic Impact. Immediately below is a summary of the development's economics.

<b>MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT THREE-STORY SUMMARY</b>					
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
Gross revenue			\$704,655.00	\$904,504.80	\$1,048,094.94
Less operating expenses			-\$211,396.50	-\$271,351.44	-\$314,428.48
Net revenue			\$493,258.50	\$633,153.36	\$733,666.46
Less development cost	-\$1,100,000.00	-\$9,105,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>-\$1,100,000.00</b>	<b>-\$9,105,000.00</b>	<b>\$493,258.50</b>	<b>\$633,153.36</b>	<b>\$733,666.46</b>
	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
Gross revenue	\$1,094,628.89	\$1,127,467.76	\$1,161,291.79	\$1,196,130.54	\$1,232,014.46
Less operating expenses	-\$328,388.67	-\$338,240.33	-\$348,387.54	-\$358,839.16	-\$369,604.34
Net revenue	\$766,240.22	\$789,227.43	\$812,904.25	\$837,291.38	\$862,410.12
Less development cost	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>\$766,240.22</b>	<b>\$789,227.43</b>	<b>\$812,904.25</b>	<b>\$837,291.38</b>	<b>\$862,410.12</b>
<b>Sale Price in Year 10 at 8.00% Capitalization Rate: \$10,780,126</b>					
<b>Net Present Value at 5% Discount Rate: \$1,538,205</b>					
<b>Internal Rate of Return: 7.4%</b>					



<b>MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT FOUR-STORY SUMMARY</b>					
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
Gross revenue			\$865,777.50	\$1,094,169.00	\$1,267,868.33
Less operating expenses			-\$259,733.25	-\$328,250.70	-\$380,360.50
Net revenue			\$606,044.25	\$765,918.30	\$887,507.83
Less development cost	-\$1,100,000.00	-\$11,167,500.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>-\$1,100,000.00</b>	<b>-\$11,167,500.00</b>	<b>\$606,044.25</b>	<b>\$765,918.30</b>	<b>\$887,507.83</b>
	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
Gross revenue	\$1,328,541.04	\$1,368,397.27	\$1,409,449.19	\$1,451,732.66	\$1,495,284.64
Less operating expenses	-\$398,562.31	-\$410,519.18	-\$422,834.76	-\$435,519.80	-\$448,585.39
Net revenue	\$929,978.73	\$957,878.09	\$986,614.43	\$1,016,212.86	\$1,046,699.25
Less development cost	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<b>Net Annual Income</b>	<b>\$929,978.73</b>	<b>\$957,878.09</b>	<b>\$986,614.43</b>	<b>\$1,016,212.86</b>	<b>\$1,046,699.25</b>
<b>Sale Price in Year 10 at 8.00% Capitalization Rate: \$13,083,741</b>					
<b>Net Present Value at 5% Discount Rate: \$1,996,957</b>					
<b>Internal Rate of Return: 7.6%</b>					

**Property Tax Impact:**

A mixed-use development with new investment of approximately \$9 million to \$11 million would benefit the City of Mebane and Alamance County through increased property tax revenues. Under the assumptions below, over the first ten years (including the design and approval phases) the project would add between \$434,000 and \$533,000 to city revenues, and a total (city plus county) impact of between \$980,000 and \$1,203,000. This does not include likely increases in sales tax collections.

**Assumptions:**

- City of Mebane tax rate: \$0.4700 per \$100 valuation, unchanged over the period
- Alamance County tax rate: \$0.5900 per \$100 valuation, unchanged over the period
- Assessed value of improvements: Assessed at 100 percent of construction cost
- Annual increase in property values: 3.00%

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT TAX REVENUE IMPACT						
<b>Three Story Development:</b>						
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	
Inflation		1.00	1.03	1.06	1.09	
Value of improvements added		\$9,105,000.00				
Total value with inflation		\$9,105,000.00	\$9,378,150.00	\$9,659,494.50	\$9,949,279.34	
City of Mebane new tax revenue		\$42,793.50	\$44,077.31	\$45,399.62	\$46,761.61	
Alamance County new tax revenue		\$53,719.50	\$55,331.09	\$56,991.02	\$58,700.75	
Total new tax revenue		\$96,513.00	\$99,408.39	\$102,390.64	\$105,462.36	
	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	1.13	1.16	1.19	1.23	1.27	
	\$10,247,757.72	\$10,555,190.45	\$10,871,846.16	\$11,198,001.54	\$11,533,941.59	
City of Mebane	\$48,164.46	\$49,609.40	\$51,097.68	\$52,630.61	\$54,209.53	\$434,743.71
Alamance County	\$60,461.77	\$62,275.62	\$64,143.89	\$66,068.21	\$68,050.26	\$545,742.10
Total	\$108,626.23	\$111,885.02	\$115,241.57	\$118,698.82	\$122,259.78	\$980,485.81
<b>Four Story Development:</b>						
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	
Inflation		1.00	1.03	1.06	1.09	
Value of improvements added		\$11,167,500.00				
Total value with inflation		\$11,167,500.00	\$11,502,525.00	\$11,847,600.75	\$12,203,028.77	
City of Mebane new tax revenue		\$52,487.25	\$54,061.87	\$55,683.72	\$57,354.24	
Alamance County new tax revenue		\$65,888.25	\$67,864.90	\$69,900.84	\$71,997.87	
Total new tax revenue		\$118,375.50	\$121,926.77	\$125,584.57	\$129,352.10	
	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 8</b>	<b>Year 9</b>	<b>Year 10</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
	1.13	1.16	1.19	1.23	1.27	
	\$12,569,119.64	\$12,946,193.22	\$13,334,579.02	\$13,734,616.39	\$14,146,654.88	
City of Mebane	\$59,074.86	\$60,847.11	\$62,672.52	\$64,552.70	\$66,489.28	\$533,223.54
Alamance County	\$74,157.81	\$76,382.54	\$78,674.02	\$81,034.24	\$83,465.26	\$669,365.72
Total	\$133,232.67	\$137,229.65	\$141,346.54	\$145,586.93	\$149,954.54	\$1,202,589.27





### Summary of Project Feasibility and Economic Impact:

Though an infill mixed-use development is a new concept for downtown Mebane, positive market conditions suggest good demand for additional apartments and commercial space in the downtown area. Commercial space demand is likely to be greatest for food, drink, and entertainment uses – as well as for services including spas, salons, financial and insurance services.

Looking at the development economics over a 10-year period (with the property sold during the tenth year), the project provides a net present value of \$1.5 to \$2.0 million at a 5 percent discount rate, depending on the size of the development. Based on our assumptions the projected internal rate of return is modest at 7.4 to 7.6 percent. Because this return might not be great enough to attract financial backing, we suggest the following possibilities for adjusting the underlying assumptions:

Increase the scope of the project, particularly to create a larger number of apartments. The greater economies of scale from a larger project could improve returns. The development's scope could be increased by developing a larger site, by using more of a site (perhaps by locating surface parking under the building), or increasing building height.

Review space rental rate assumptions over time to see if Mebane can support higher rent rates. Currently, we believe that the Mebane market supports lower rent rates than communities to the east (such as Hillsborough, Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Durham) but higher than Burlington and Graham to the west. If the growth and perceived attractiveness of Mebane as a place to live and work continues, apartment and commercial space rents might increase to approach those in communities to the east. Higher rent rates could significantly improve the project's returns.

Review options for acquiring a suitable property. Partnering with an existing landowner on a joint venture could reduce up-front costs and thus enhance overall returns.

A mixed-use project of this scale – with new investment of \$9 million to \$11 million – would add significantly to City of Mebane and Alamance County property tax revenues. The city could see additional revenue of \$434,000 to \$533,000 over a 10-year period, with a total local government impact of \$980,000 to \$1,200,000. Increased sales taxes would provide additional revenues.

The greatest economic impact to downtown and Mebane as a whole would be the increased density of residents and business activity, solidifying downtown's position as the center of the community. It would add to the downtown being known as a gathering place and attraction for residents of Mebane and others throughout Alamance and Orange counties. Successful development of a new concept in downtown Mebane would also build private sector confidence for making additional investments in the downtown area.



*Farmers Market structures in Hillsborough, NC (top) and Cullman, AL.*

## B4. Permanent Home for the Mebane Farmers Market

For years, the Mebane Farmers Market has been located downtown at the corner of Third and Clay streets. The market is held in an unpaved parking lot with no permanent structure. The area occupies about one-quarter of an acre. In 2018, hours are Saturdays from 7:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, from June through early October. As the market has slowly grown in the number of vendors and shoppers, interest has increased in finding a more permanent home – with a pavilion or similar structure – to house the farmers market.

A farmers market pavilion can be a simple canopy covering the produce display and shopping area, or can include a variety of features and amenities. The most common added elements are lighting, electrical outlets, and one or more water spigots. Some markets also provide restrooms, picnic table seating, a gardening area, and even an ATM.

### Positives of a Permanent Location and Structure in Downtown Mebane:

- Paved area would provide an attractive, all-weather surface for vendors and shoppers.
- Canopy provides weather protection for produce, shoppers, and vendors.
- New site could allow expansion for a larger number of vendors.
- Structure with lighting and electricity could be used/rented for a variety of other uses, including music concerts, crafts fairs, flea markets, family reunions, weddings, and other private events.
- Pavement could provide additional downtown parking during non-market hours.
- Public restrooms, if included, are viewed as a desired amenity downtown.

### Potential Negatives of a New Location and Structure:

- Project costs for developing a new site and structure.
- Current location, though a small site, has very good visibility and is known for hosting the farmers market.
- Maintenance costs for a permanent structure, particularly if restrooms are included.

### Size and Cost of New Farmers Market Structures:

Economic Leadership researched several farmers market pavilions constructed since 2006, including those in downtown Hillsborough and Durham. More recent projects included three in small U.S. cities with populations of less than 40,000. These farmers market pavilion sizes range from 2,352 square feet to 9,000 square feet, with an average of 4,810 square feet. Project costs ranged widely, from \$50 per square foot to \$220 per square foot. Those extremes might be unusual, for the former number involved purchase of an inexpensive, pre-engineered “glulam” pavilion kit, while the latter construction project included site development for an overflow vendor area and pavilion expansion area, creation of a “master gardeners plaza,” and two restrooms.





*Farmers Market structures in Findlay, OH (top) and Covington, VA.*

The other projects averaged \$87 per square foot. Given recent rises in construction material and labor costs, a current estimate of \$100 per square foot is reasonable.

**Potential Permanent Mebane Farmers Market Project Cost:**

Excluding Land Acquisition

Approximate Dimensions:	40' x 80'
Approximate Size:	3,200 square feet
Estimated Cost per Square Foot:	\$100 per SF
Estimated Construction Cost:	\$320,000
Amenities Included:	Lighting, electric outlets, water spigot
Additional Cost:	Restrooms

**Potential Locations:**

The amount of land needed is relatively small – likely to be well under one-half acre. Any relatively flat, visible site with good road access could serve the purpose. Potential locations could include Center Street (Highway 70) west of Wilba Road; the north side of Clay Street between Second and Wilba; and the south side of Ruffin Street if some or all of the large gravel lot between Third and Fourth streets was paved.

**Potential Funding Sources:**

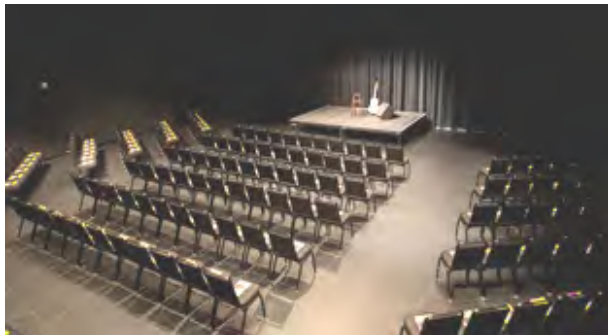
Most funds for farmers market pavilions appear to come from local government budgets. However, there are alternate sources of project funds. In the small city of Benton, Arkansas, the great majority of the \$520,000 needed for the new pavilion that opened in 2018 was raised from local businesses and individuals. In Hillsborough, North Carolina, a \$90,000 grant obtained through Congressman David Price provided nearly half of the project cost. Another source of federal grants is the USDA, through the agency’s Farmers Market Promotion Program or its Rural Development programs.

**Project Feasibility and Impact:**

It is unlikely that revenues from farmers market operations and event rentals will significantly offset the cost of a pavilion construction project. Indeed, the goal of income from market operations and event rentals should be to pay for ongoing maintenance and utility costs. Seeking additional funds to supplement local government investment – through grants and private contributions – is likely the best way to reduce the required level of public investment.



*Farmers Market in Carrboro, NC.*



*150 Seat Space, Burnsville, MN.*



*150 Seat Space, Emerson Collage, MA.*

Even though most outdoor farmers markets in America only operate once or twice a week, building a market pavilion can be a relatively low-cost investment to create another focal point of activity in the downtown area. A pavilion structure offers the flexibility to host a variety of events, from live music to crafts fairs to family reunions. In a small downtown with relatively few public outdoor gathering spaces, a permanent farmers market structure could represent an important addition.

#### **B4: Additional Project Summaries**

##### **Venue for Live Performances and Movies**

A number of stakeholders and survey respondents indicated a desire for a flexible arts venue that could host live music concerts, theater performances and other arts, as well as screening of movies (perhaps second-run or classic films). There are a number of larger such venues in the region, such as the Garner Performing Arts Center – housed in an old high school building – and the Harvester Performance Center in a converted hardware store in downtown Rocky Mount, Virginia. Both of those seat around 460 people, and given the similar size of the existing Mebane Arts & Community Center it is likely that a smaller venue would be a better fit downtown.

Many communities have small, flexible venues often referred to as “black box” theaters. Downtown Greensboro’s Triad Stage (located in a former Montgomery Ward multi-story building) added a 90-seat Upstage Cabaret space in 2008. In downtown Asheville, the non-profit NC Stage Company reused a nondescript commercial building for a 125-seat theater, now running for more than 16 years. An old Woolworth store in Griffin, Georgia was renovated in 2001 into a 100-seat black box theater. Even a small venue can draw an impressive number of visitors; Williamston, Michigan’s 88-seat black box theater boasts attendance of over 10,000 per year

Small black box venues are often constructed as part of a major performing arts center complex, or on college and even high school campuses. However, they can be stand-alone and successful in renovated downtown spaces. They may be non-profit, community, or privately owned. New construction of theater space can be very expensive, usually starting at \$200 per square foot and rising to \$500 or more per square foot. But renovation of existing space for a simple, flexible venue can cost significantly less. The cost will vary greatly based on the condition of the building, project specifics, and the presence of existing items such as heating and cooling systems, sufficient electrical power, restrooms, and offices.

A 150-seat venue with flexible seating arrangements will likely require a space of around 3,000 square feet. A small venue could be accommodated in many existing buildings downtown, such as the two-story space at 111 N. Third St.; the former Karma on Third building at 200 N. Third St.; the two-story building at 112-114 N. Fourth St.; 100 E. Clay St.; or a portion of the larger building at the corner of W. Graham St. and N. First St.





*175 Seat Space, Claremont, OK.*



*135 Seat Space, Burlington, VT.*

Research indicates that many performing arts centers and similar venues fail to cover operating costs through performance income, needing contributions or memberships to finish in the black. To generate more income, black box theaters are usually available for rent to private and civic groups. A case study summary for a larger venue, including community economic impact, is provided below.

### **HARVESTER PERFORMANCE CENTER, ROCKY MOUNT, VA**

Located in a large, old hardware store downtown, the Harvester Center opened in April 2014 after a \$2.7 million renovation project. With the building being just over 8,000 square feet, the project costs equaled about \$335 per square foot. Funding came from the Town of Rocky Mount, a grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission, and historic property tax credits. Capacity is 460 with no fixed seating and a variety of seating arrangements. Harvester has a full slate of national live music acts and other performances throughout the year, and offers lower-level space for rent for meetings and other events. The property is owned by the Town of Rocky Mount.

Visitor spending has been estimated at \$93 per person, with a community economic impact of more than \$2.2 million during the center's first nine months of operation. The Town of Rocky Mount reported that this spending resulted in an increase of \$111,000 in tax revenues over the first nine months.

In its first months of operation, the venue lost nearly \$50,000 per month. 2015 saw a net loss of \$231,000. However, Harvester turned small profits in 2016 and 2017.

**BOILING SPRINGS, NC:**

**YMCA serving town population of 4,700 plus Gardner-Webb University.**

**35,000 square feet with double gym, indoor climbing wall, and outdoor pool with splash park.**

**Cost \$7.5 million when built in 2008.**

**Approximately 140,000 visits per year.**

**YADKINVILLE, NC:**

**YMCA in community with town population of 3,000, county population of 37,600.**

**44,000 square feet with indoor pool, gym with walking track above.**

**Built 2001.**

**Approximately 50,000 visits per year.**

**Downtown-Area YMCA**

YMCA facilities can serve as a community focal point, and due to their high-volume use by members can increase visitor traffic for nearby businesses. Even Ys in modest-sized communities in North Carolina see user visitation of more than 100,000 visits per year.

Across the country, there is wide variation in the size, amenities, and cost of newly-constructed Y facilities. A recent scan of new YMCAs shows sizes ranging from 16,000 square feet to 85,000 square feet, costing between \$240 and \$370 per square foot. Small facilities such as the 19,000 square foot Y in Wilson, NC (population 49,600) and a 16,000 square foot Y in Olympia, WA (population 51,000) are in former private fitness center buildings, and usually lack a pool or indoor track. Large facilities will have at least one indoor pool, gym, classrooms, and possibly a climbing wall, child care space, and a teen center. YMCA facility directors indicate that an indoor pool is the most expensive amenity to operate.

In central North Carolina, current projected construction costs of \$250 to \$300 per square foot seem reasonable for a new YMCA. That would indicate project costs of \$7.5 million to \$9.0 million for a 30,000 square foot facility, and costs of \$11.25 million to \$13.5 million for a 45,000 square foot facility. These could potentially be located on a parcel as small as two to three acres, though a property that small could require a multi-story building with no outside play areas or ball fields.

Creating a YMCA facility in a redeveloped existing building (other than in a former fitness center) is likely to cost roughly the same as for new construction, due to the specialized nature of YMCA amenities and the great amount of renovation that would be necessary. One potential location in an existing building is the large Kingsdown factory and office complex located along Washington, Third, and Holt streets on the south side of downtown.

The box to the left details the size, amenities, and visitation of two YMCAs located in small North Carolina cities and towns.



*48,000 square foot Danville, VA YMCA.*