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Prepared for:

The Citizens of the City of Charlotte
and Mecklenburg County

Under the Direction of:

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1 October 2011

Dear Citizens of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County,

As co-chairs of the Center City 2020 Vision Plan Steering Committee, we are proud to present the Center City 2020 Vision Plan, which sets forth the next chapter in Charlotte's notable planning history. Center City experienced unprecedented growth during the past decade, which was guided by Vision Plans dating back to the 1966 Odell Plan. The new Enduring Vision of the 2020 Vision Plan to become a 'viable, livable, memorable and sustainable Center City' will advance this effort and guide growth and development over the next ten to thirty years.

As the 2020 Vision Plan's goals and recommendations are implemented, the creation of new jobs will be promoted, Charlotte's unique tapestry of neighborhoods will be celebrated and strengthened, investment in 21st century infrastructure will be encouraged, and the natural environment will be preserved and enhanced.

We are indebted to the community for having been an integral part in the creation of this 2020 Vision Plan. The ideas and feedback received through numerous public workshops made this much more than a community 'input' process, but rather a community 'building' endeavor. For this dedication to all of our futures, we thank you.

Producing this 2020 Vision Plan shows we intend to remain competitive in the global marketplace and proclaims that Charlotte is ready to move forward, even during tough economic times. The goals and recommendations of this 2020 Vision Plan represent a responsive and positive vision for the future of Charlotte's Center City.

Sincerely,

2020 Vision Plan Steering Committee Co-Chairs



Ann Caulkins

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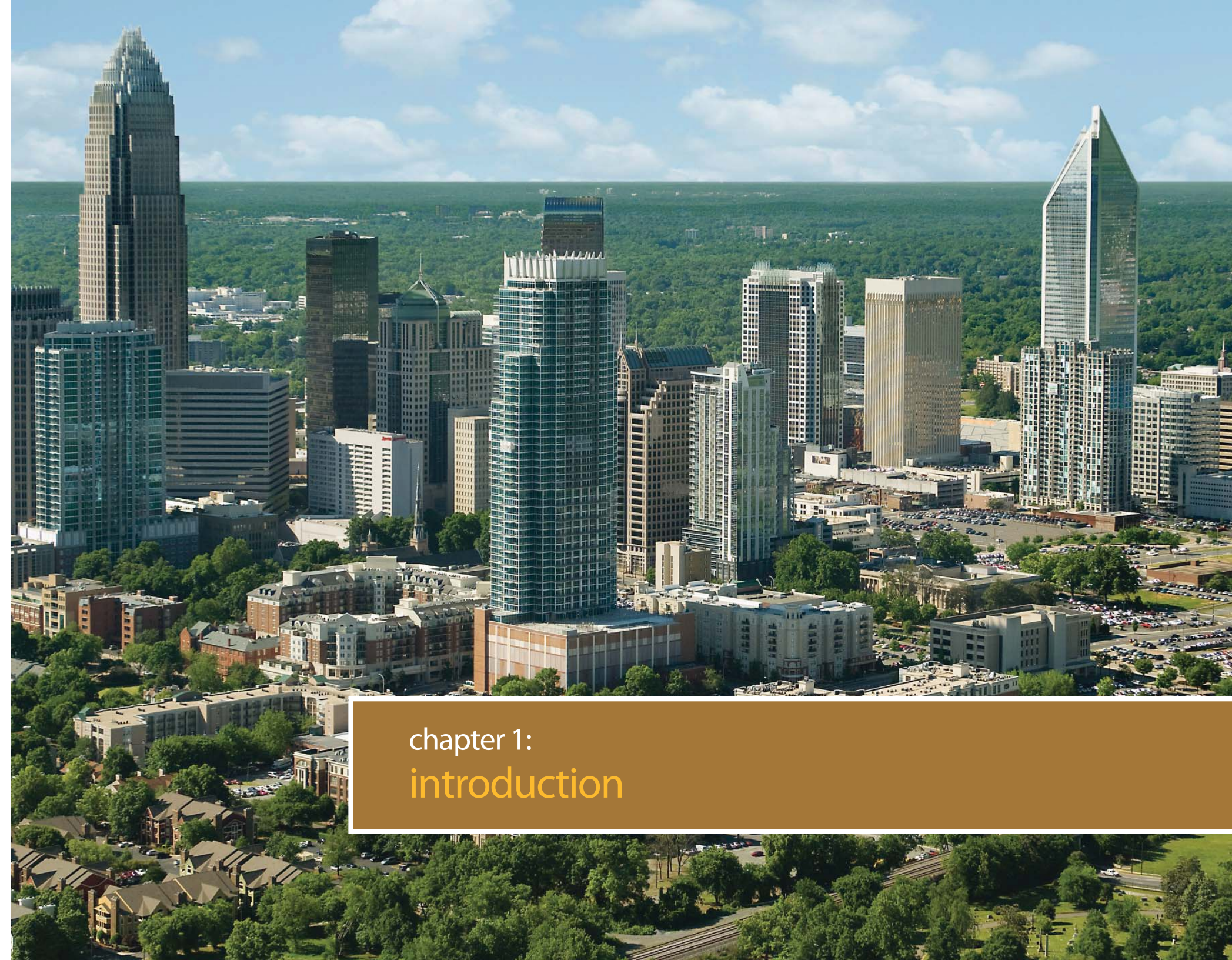


Harvey Gantt

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chapter 1:
introduction

chapter 1: introduction

Charlotte's Center City has undergone dramatic growth and change over the past decade. From the development of new cultural venues and educational institutions to beautiful parks, walkable streets, and new housing, restaurants and shops, the evolution has been remarkable—and it has not been by chance. These changes have resulted from many successful planning efforts, collaborative partnerships, and strategic investments by the public and private sectors. Combined, they have led to **the rebirth of Center City as a vibrant focal point of a thriving region.**

The changing dynamics in Charlotte's urban core have stemmed from the area's already rich social and

cultural history, infused with new leadership, ideas and creativity. The result is an even stronger commitment to ensure that Center City is positioned for success for decades to come. The continued vitality of Charlotte's Center City is critical to the success of Charlotte and the surrounding region. Building on the many achievements of the 2010 Vision Plan and other recent initiatives, Center City is poised for a new era of collaboration, development and prosperity that will further enhance the lives of all Charlotteans.

Creating the Charlotte Center City 2020 Vision Plan is a critical strategy to ensure a promising future for Center City and the greater region. A cooperative effort

among the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and Charlotte Center City Partners, the 2020 Vision Plan is a comprehensive, strategic plan that provides a **"big picture" framework and unifying vision for Center City growth and development.**

The 2020 Vision Plan study area expands the scope of previous planning efforts and reflects the inclusive nature of the plan and process. While Uptown is the traditional center of the City, the study area also reaches beyond the I-77/I-277 freeway loop to embrace all of the surrounding Center City neighborhoods.

The Charlotte Center City 2020 Vision Plan sets forth a **bold vision** for the future that is unique to this modern, livable and gracious City. It provides a set of **innovative, transformative strategies** that chart the course for achieving the vision. And it outlines **clear implementation actions** to ensure that these ideas become reality in the coming years.

In setting the stage for the specific recommendations of the 2020 Vision Plan, this Introduction chapter includes the following sections:

- Setting.
- The Charlotte Center City Story.
- Assets, Opportunities and Challenges.
- Building the Future: The Economic Foundation.
- 2020 Planning Process.
- Summary.



Setting

The geographic location and physical setting of Center City have strongly influenced its past and will continue to be key elements in shaping its future.

As part of an important and growing metropolitan region of the United States, **Center City Charlotte plays an integral role in larger social, cultural and economic contexts.** At the greater regional scale, Center City is a major player in the Southeast and has interdependencies related to resources, commerce and transportation with several metropolitan areas in North Carolina and neighboring states. At the metropolitan scale, Center City is a strong attraction for tourists, industry and commerce within the Charlotte region. At the city scale, the Uptown core has the highest concentration of people and jobs in the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, making it a top economic performer in the state.

PIEDMONT ATLANTIC MEGA REGION

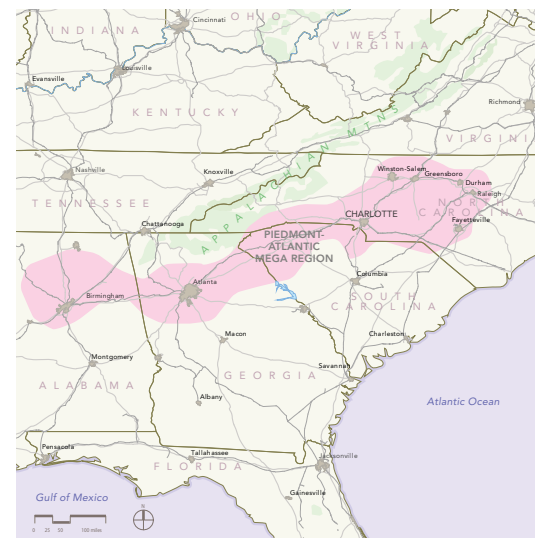
The Southeast United States contains several major cities and metropolitan areas collectively known as the Piedmont Atlantic Mega Region (see Regional Context). These cities include Charlotte and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; and Birmingham, Alabama. The physical proximity and economic commonalities of these cities generate many positive benefits, such as attracting an educated work force and industry clusters that bolster the commerce of the entire region.

However, the area as a whole has several challenges, including traffic congestion, urban sprawl, increased energy demands, pollution and aging infrastructure. With a population projected to be more than 20 million by the year 2025, the Piedmont Atlantic Mega Region will continue to face the issue of balancing growth opportunities while managing resource demands.

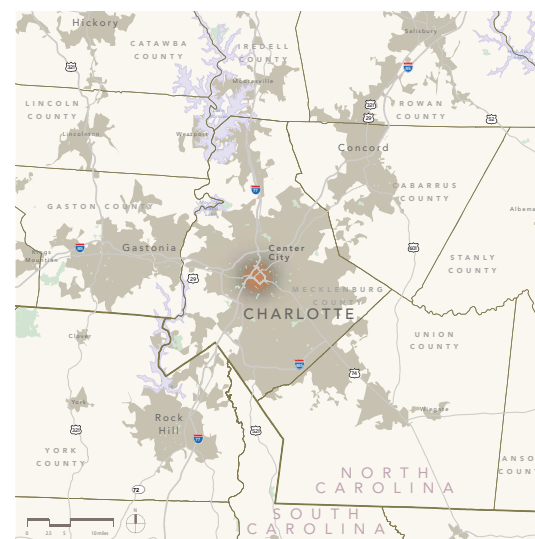
CHARLOTTE METROPOLITAN AREA

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County are the major jurisdictions of the Charlotte Metropolitan Area (see Charlotte Region). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the metropolitan area population grew by approximately 26 percent between 2000 and 2009 to reach a total of 2.4 million, making greater Charlotte the country's 20th most populous metro area. The region's growth has largely been driven by a robust employment market, relative affordability and a high overall quality of life.

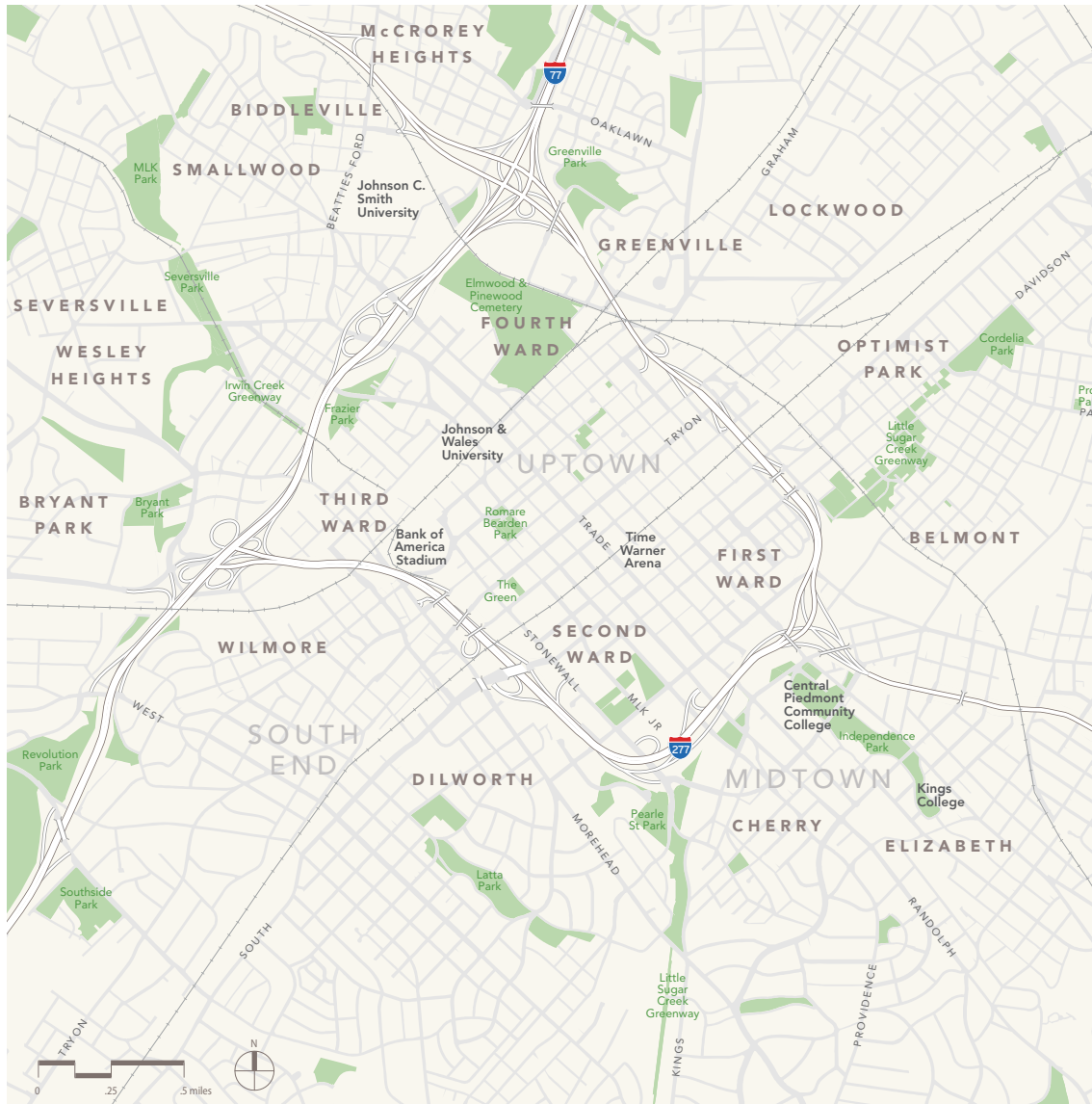
Within the metropolitan area, Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte have been the anchors for population growth, increasing by 34 and 32 percent, respectively, between 2000 and 2009. Mecklenburg County has a population of approximately 935,000 and is bordered by a chain of lakes and Gaston County to the west and Cabarrus County to the northeast. At 286 square miles, Charlotte comprises most of Mecklenburg County's land area and is North Carolina's largest city with a population of approximately 700,000.



Regional Context



Charlotte Region



Charlotte Center City Study Area

The metro area is bisected by several major highways and interstates, as well as railway corridors that link cities within the region. Just 7.5 miles from Uptown, the Charlotte Douglas International Airport provides access to domestic and foreign destinations and contributes nearly \$10 billion annually to the regional economy. Overall, Charlotte is characterized by general growth in employment opportunities, an educated workforce, and a relatively low cost of living compared with similarly-sized cities across the country.



City of Charlotte

CHARLOTTE CENTER CITY

Located in the central part of Mecklenburg County, Center City is the historic hub of Charlotte's economy and culture. While there is no jurisdictional boundary for Center City, previous planning efforts for central Charlotte largely focused attention on Uptown—the traditional “downtown” bounded by the I-77/I-277 freeway loop. As defined by this plan, Center City includes not only Uptown but also the expanse of surrounding neighborhoods adjacent to the freeway loop (see Charlotte Center City Study Area).

Employment is a critical element of Center City's economic health. Finance and banking have played prominent roles in recent decades, with the major employers of Bank of America and Wells Fargo/Wachovia Bank anchoring a strong services sector. Energy, healthcare, education, and government employment are also important to the economic vibrancy of Center City and the greater region.

Center City's recent population growth has been facilitated by public and private sector efforts to bring substantial residential development and employment to the core. It has also been supported by a growing national trend toward living in downtowns and dense urban settings. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Charlotte added 60,795 households between 2000 and 2008. Uptown and the adjacent South End area alone added 7,100 new residential units, primarily in the form of new apartments, townhomes and condominiums.

The Charlotte Center City Story

Center City has evolved from its historic roots as a settlement at the crossroads of Trade and Tryon streets to become the downtown and heart of a burgeoning metropolitan area.

Today, Center City Charlotte is a modern, diversified and vibrant urban center comprised of many distinct neighborhoods. It is home to successful companies, a range of government offices, professional sports teams, universities, museums, and dozens of restaurants, hotels and new mixed-use developments. Center City is also the location of classic single-family home neighborhoods, each with their own distinct character. The neighborhoods include a diversity of parks, senior centers, schools, religious institutions, shops, local food markets, and other community amenities. However, unlike cities such as New York, Philadelphia or Washington, D.C., these historic areas surround a core of nearly all modern buildings and new cityscape. This **mix of bold new development with traditional neighborhoods** makes Center City truly unique.



Center City is the hub of the economic, social and cultural life of the Charlotte region.



The location of traditional neighborhoods close to the urban core is one of Center City's unique assets.



First Ward Place is a Hope VI mixed-income housing project with two- and three-story garden apartments.



The Fifth and Poplar Condominiums in Fourth Ward provide a range of owner-occupied housing options and a full-service grocery store just blocks from Independence Square.

CENTER CITY'S NEIGHBORHOODS

Uptown

Uptown is the traditional core of Charlotte and the most “urban” part of Center City. It is defined as the area within the I-77/I-277 freeway loop. Trade and Tryon streets divide Uptown into four quadrants or “wards.” Named First, Second, Third and Fourth wards, each of them contributes to Center City’s urban identity:

- **First Ward** is one of Charlotte’s original neighborhoods and is defined as the northeast quadrant of Uptown. There is significant public land ownership in First Ward, and it is the location of the Charlotte Housing Authority’s successful Hope VI mixed-income development.
- **Second Ward** is the southeast quadrant of Uptown and was originally known as Brooklyn—the heart of Charlotte’s African-American community. It is now home to many government and civic uses.
- **Third Ward** is the southwest quadrant of Uptown and was developed as a streetcar suburb, with trolley tracks running down the center of West Trade Street. A strong financial services industry was built along South Tryon Street, helping the area to emerge as the “Wall Street of the Carolinas.” It continues today as a center of banking, commerce, arts and culture.
- **Fourth Ward** is the northwest quadrant of Uptown. Over the past 40 years it has been transformed into an area of historic homes that are convenient to Uptown businesses and shops. The Fourth Ward Historic District is Uptown’s only registered historic district.

Surrounding Neighborhoods

While Uptown is the primary hub of Center City jobs and new housing development, the surrounding neighborhoods are home to most of Center City’s residents and much of its social, cultural and economic vitality. On a neighborhood scale, Charlotte’s population is densest just outside of the freeway loop, with approximately 28% of the city’s population residing within one to four miles from Uptown. Center City’s neighborhoods beyond Uptown include Optimist Park, Belmont Park, Elizabeth, Cherry, Dilworth, Wilmore, Bryant Park, Wesley Heights, Seversville, Biddleville, McCrorey Heights, Greenville and Lockwood (see Charlotte Center City Study Area on page 4).

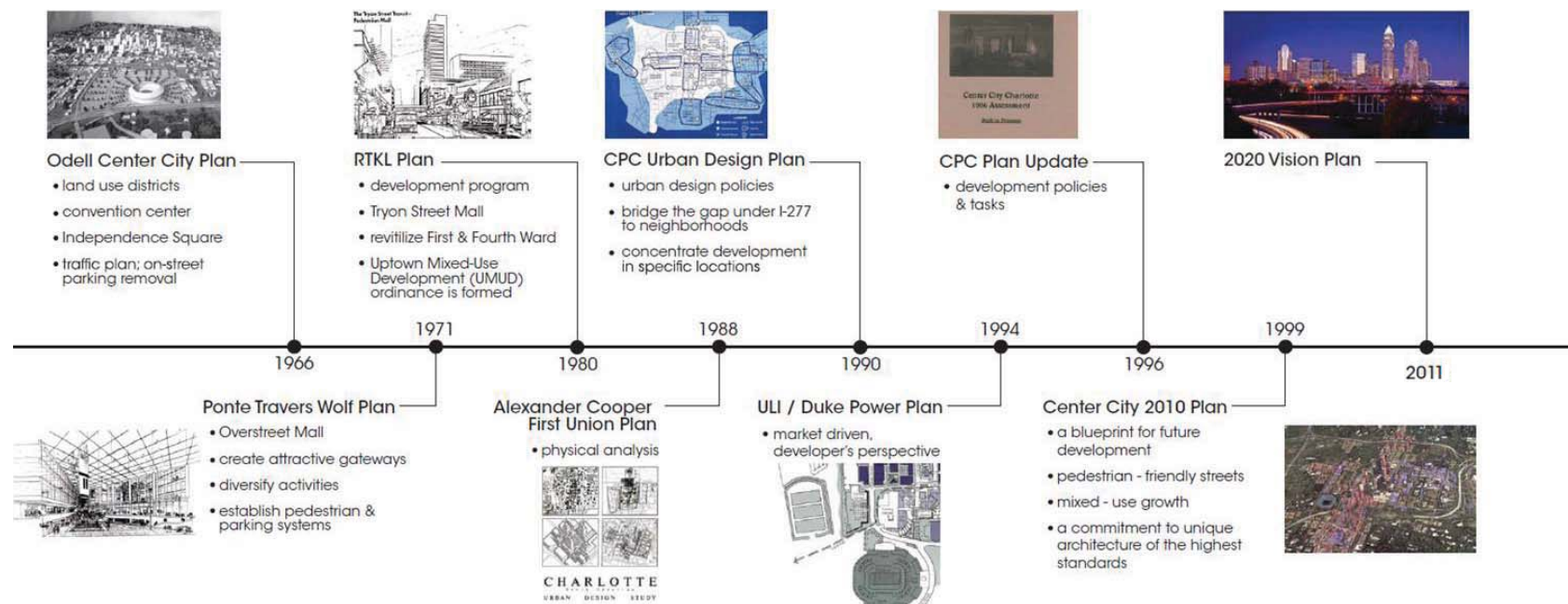
FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

Center City's successes in recent years can be largely attributed to three primary influences: a history of planning and successful implementation; the direction of the 2010 Vision Plan; and a tradition of collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Decades of Planning and Successful Implementation

Past planning efforts and the cultivation of unified visions for Center City have had great impact. Multiple plans have directed investment into Center City, particularly Uptown, through ambitious goals and improvements over several decades.

While the City's roots date to the pre-Revolutionary War era, it wasn't until the 1960s that Charlotte developed its first master plan. The Odell Center City Plan (1966) responded to the impacts of suburbanization, outlying shopping centers, and the interstate highway system with a vision of residential districts connected to the urban core by a series of wide streets. The Ponte Travers Wolf Plan (1971), RTKL Plan (1980) and CPC Urban Design Plan (1990) all built upon this foundation, outlining design guidelines, pedestrian enhancements, regional transit initiatives, and new development opportunities to shape the urban vision for Center City.





The 2010 Vision Plan identified the former Convention Center site as one of the most significant redevelopment parcels in Uptown, and was subsequently demolished.



The EpiCentre mixed-use entertainment and retail complex was constructed on the former Convention Center site.

2010 Vision Plan Recommendations and Accomplishments

The 2010 Vision Plan has been the largest building block for Center City development and growth over the past decade. The plan's overarching vision is to create a "viable, livable and memorable" Center City with distinct neighborhoods connected by unique infrastructure. Since its adoption in May of 2000, investment catalyzed by the plan has resulted in a remarkable amount of new development, additional residents and strong business activity.

The 2010 Vision Plan calls for a balanced mix of uses with distinctive design, as well as a walkable city that connects to neighborhoods outside the I-77/I-277 freeway loop. The vision is based on strategies to encourage office and retail uses, improve housing and livability, and develop a robust transportation network. The plan also highlights several priority projects, including the acquisition of land for new parks and a greenway trail; the redevelopment of the former convention center as a mixed-use site; and the creation of a new residential village adjacent to the government district in Second Ward. Numerous other Center City plans and policies are based upon the strong vision, policies, projects and programs set forth by the 2010 Vision Plan. These include transportation-related documents, design guidelines, and area plans for specific neighborhoods and wards.

Many of the 2010 Vision Plan's recommendations have been implemented, including:

- Redevelopment of Midtown Square into the Metropolitan mixed-use complex and focused development of the Little Sugar Creek Greenway corridor.

- Redesign of the intersection at Stonewall Street, Kenilworth Avenue and Charlottetowne Avenue, which helped to improve connectivity from Uptown to Midtown.
- Completion of ImaginOn, the children's library and theatre; development of the UNC Charlotte (UNCC) Building; and redevelopment of the convention center site with the EpiCentre entertainment and retail complex.
- Allocation of land for a new minor league baseball stadium and two new parks in Second Ward and Third Ward, which hold the potential to attract future development to the area.
- Development of approximately 7,750 housing units and more than six million square feet of office space, surpassing plan projections.
- Great expansion of arts, cultural and entertainment venues, such as the Levine Center for the Arts, Mint Museum of Art, Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Knight Theater and Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Art and Culture.

Collaboration between the Public and Private Sectors

Strong collaboration between public and private sectors has also been critical in the current success of Center City. Private sector entities such as developers, businesses, foundations and non-profits have all been key partners in project implementation with the City, County, North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), and other government agencies. Recent successful collaborations include initiatives on retail strategy, transportation infrastructure, affordable housing, crime prevention and employment.

Assets, Opportunities and Challenges

Center City Charlotte has **many of the ingredients needed to evolve as an even more successful and exciting urban core** in the coming years. The overall strength of the regional economy and investment over the past decade has resulted in a resilient and prosperous place. Yet the pathway to achieving the community's vision is marked with many challenges.

ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES: BUILDING ON CENTER CITY'S STRENGTHS

From growth in housing development to an abundance of first-rate amenities and institutions, Center City has a strong foundation upon which to build a vibrant future under the 2020 Vision Plan. Specific assets and opportunities include:

- A strong economy.** Despite the economic downturn, with approximately 82,900 workers Center City remains the region's primary economic engine and employment center. Uptown is a major banking and financial hub. Retail businesses and shopping opportunities have also increased in recent years. Charlotte's top-level professional sports teams, including the Carolina Panthers and Charlotte Bobcats, are substantial revenue generators that attract millions of fans and visitors. The area's many schools and universities also support the economic strength of Center City and promote an educated workforce.
- Investment and development.** Since adoption of the 2010 Vision Plan, renewed interest in Center City has resulted in many completed and planned developments, including the ImaginOn children's library and theatre, Time Warner Cable Arena and UNCC's new Uptown building. The planned Brooklyn Village is a project that will reinvigorate the Second Ward neighborhood with a new park and a combination of residential and commercial space. Public investment in Uptown, such as construction of the Mecklenburg County Courthouse, also shows that civic life continues to flourish in Center City's urban core.
- Culture and entertainment.** The social, entertainment and dining opportunities of Center City are major assets to Charlotte's culture and economy. Sporting venues, bars and restaurants, special events (such as First Night), museums, and art are all important aspects of Center City's allure. Recent projects changing the face of Center City include EpiCentre, NASCAR Hall of Fame and Levine Center for the Arts. Center City's libraries and theater venues provide residents and visitors with additional cultural and entertainment opportunities. Live concerts at the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, North Carolina Music Factory, Spirit Square and other venues are also popular.
- Commitment to transit.** Charlotte has made major investments in the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) over the last decade. The 9.6-mile LYNX Blue Line light rail opened in 2007. Streetcar tracks have been installed in Elizabeth and additional funding has been identified for construction of the remainder of the first phase. Public and private investments over the next decade should capitalize on existing and planned transit investments.



Center City's live music, performances and events enrich Charlotteans' lives as well as boost the local economy.



Recent transit-oriented development and remaining potential at existing and future rail stations are major assets for Center City.



Elizabeth is a neighborhood just outside of Uptown that has seen significant growth in recent years.



Center City has several nicely-scaled urban parks, plazas and gathering spaces.

- **Higher education and emerging technology.** Higher education is a key ingredient of the area's strength as a regional center of academic opportunities and corporate partnerships. Center City has several colleges and universities, including Central Piedmont Community College, Johnson & Wales University, Johnson C. Smith University and the new UNCC Center City building. The Wake Forest School of Business and Northeastern University have also established Uptown campuses. These higher education facilities and resources can contribute to the growth of high tech jobs and emerging technologies in Charlotte. However, the potential for a robust "urban campus culture" is currently hampered by a lack of physical connectivity and collaboration between educational entities. A key opportunity is to foster the growth and integration of the area's colleges, community colleges and universities—including their physical development, partnerships, programs and outreach—into the fabric of the downtown economy.
- **A variety of parks and open spaces.** Center City's parks and open spaces include a diversity of urban plazas, neighborhood parks, greenway trails and historic cemeteries. Several private landscaped areas and civic plazas between streets and building entrances also create spaces for greenery, recreation and public gathering. In Uptown, spaces such as Fourth Ward Park, the Green and Frazier Park allow people to relax, gather and recreate. The planned Romare Bearden Park in Third Ward and future parks in First Ward and Second Ward will add additional open space. Larger parks located outside the I-77/I-277 freeway loop include Freedom Regional Park, which is being connected to the rest of Center City and the larger region via the Little Sugar Creek Greenway.
- **Safe, family-friendly and relatively affordable.** Charlotte's growth is largely attributable to its overall high quality of life. The City's feeling of safety and its good schools have attracted new residents from around the country. Center City, in particular, has capitalized on Charlotte's reputation for livability to attract major employers and employees to Uptown, and has become one of the most walkable and safe places in the City. A key opportunity will be to develop more affordable and workforce housing, as families and other underrepresented groups currently have difficulty buying or renting in the core of Center City.
- **A tapestry of neighborhoods.** Charlotte is a city of neighborhoods. Center City's neighborhoods are unique, ranging from historic homes in places like Fourth Ward, Lockwood and Dilworth to the recent development boom of new housing and shops in South End and Elizabeth. A main element of the 2010 Vision Plan is improving connectivity between Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods. However, such connections, development and growth can adversely impact the livability of adjacent neighborhoods if not planned properly. Care must be taken to ensure context-sensitive neighborhood development and appropriate transition of densities from the Uptown core.

- Strong civic leadership.** The strength of Charlotte's neighborhoods and recent investment in Center City can be credited in part to strong civic leadership. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County provide a range of community services and work in partnership with neighborhood groups, non-profit organizations, religious institutions and academic leaders to advance initiatives for community health and well being. Through the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee, the City and County advocate for inclusiveness and participatory processes.
- Historic roots.** The City of Charlotte has a rich history highlighted by its early days as a crossroads of Native American trading routes; its role in the Revolutionary War and Civil War; its era of mining, milling and manufacturing; and its eventual emergence as a modern financial center. However, many of the physical remnants reflecting this history were lost over recent decades as numerous Uptown historic buildings and landmarks were sacrificed to make way for new development. In Fourth Ward, a historic zoning overlay now protects this unique neighborhood just a short distance from office towers, sports arenas and cultural destinations. Such historic preservation measures are important to help save the last remaining physical elements of Charlotte's history and to anchor Center City's social fabric and sense of place.
- Strong urban form.** Appropriate density in the right locations, contiguous development patterns, and active streetscapes are all things that create a memorable and vibrant city. Tryon Street in Uptown is already a model for pedestrian-friendly design and a cohesive urban fabric. Its success can and should be replicated elsewhere in Center City, to bolster planning for stronger centers and corridors and cluster more dense development around transit lines and stations.
- Development opportunities.** The large amount of vacant and underutilized land throughout Center City provides many opportunities for new development. Vacant parcels, surface parking lots and underutilized structures should be redeveloped in a manner that helps to "stitch" the urban fabric back together. Publicly-owned land—such as the Hal Marshall site in First Ward and properties along North Graham and East Stonewall streets—presents excellent opportunities for catalytic development and strategic partnerships that will spur further revitalization.



Historic South Tryon Street (illustrated above) has largely been redeveloped with contemporary skyscrapers, but remains the most prominent street and home to signature addresses in Center City.



Existing parking structures in Uptown have multiple inactive edges, are often adjacent to other parking facilities and detract from the overall urban fabric.



While restaurants and nightlife are thriving, retail opportunities in Center City are severely limited.

CHALLENGES

Already one of the fastest growing cities in the nation, Charlotte will need to focus on generating new jobs and housing to meet the demand of forecasted population growth. Challenges range from repositioning Center City within a changing economic environment to ensuring that infrastructure meets future needs. Specific challenges include:

- **Economics and employment.** Competing with other regional, national and global cities to create a healthy and sustainable economy is a growing challenge. Although Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte have lower overall unemployment rates than most major U.S. metro areas, economic turmoil in the commercial banking and financial services industries has had dramatic impact on the regional economy and contributed to rising job losses.
- **Limited housing choice.** Urban, family-friendly neighborhoods are important to Center City's future as a livable place. Maintaining affordability will be a challenge as new development projects and other Center City investments increase property values. As the City continues to grow, it will be important to preserve the livability of the core neighborhoods while creating a range of new housing options, including a supply of new or refurbished workforce housing targeted to low- and middle-income households. Residential development in Center City will need to provide convenient access to public transit and shopping, while fitting in with adjoining uses and existing neighborhoods.
- **Incomplete neighborhoods.** Several of Center City's neighborhoods lack services and amenities such as parks, grocery stores, schools and places to eat, drink and socialize. Furthermore, there are a limited number of connections providing residents with access to amenities in adjacent neighborhoods.
- **The barrier of the loop.** The I-77/I-277 freeway loop is a significant physical barrier between Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods, greatly influencing the development patterns of Center City. While the loop serves to contain larger building footprints and office towers within Uptown—thereby protecting surrounding neighborhoods from the encroachment of out-of-scale development—it also contributes to poor connectivity and cuts off several close-in employment and residential areas. Overcoming the real and perceived barrier created by the loop is a significant challenge.
- **Parking in Uptown.** Parking structures and surface parking lots are dominant features in Center City, particularly in Uptown. Many of the area's parking facilities are single use with big, blank walls at the street level that discourage pedestrian and bicycle activity. Surface lots are typically unattractive, without landscaping or shade features. Meanwhile, new developments require adequate amounts of parking to serve businesses and residents. The redevelopment of Center City demands creative thinking to resolve design issues related to off-street parking structures and lots; reduce parking needs for existing and new development; encourage use of mass transit to reduce overall parking demand; and leverage new parking technologies to manage supply and access.

- Roadway network and alternative transportation modes.** As Center City's commercial and mixed-use areas add density, it will be important to provide alternatives to driving. Sections of I-277 currently experience frequent congestion. Some local roadways that provide access from adjacent residential neighborhoods can also become congested during peak hours. Policies, projects and programs must be implemented to help manage the number of people driving to, through and around Center City. Over the long term, transportation should prioritize non-single occupancy vehicle modes including walking, biking, buses and rail transit as well as carpooling.
- Public transit operations.** Charlotte's light rail and bus service are amenities that help make the City a great place to live. However, Center City's transportation center is insufficient in size to handle current demand. The lack of adequate stacking and bus transfer space often leads to queuing and congestion on Trade and 4th streets. Connections to surrounding neighborhoods and fast, efficient transit routes are critical. As the public transit system expands, identifying and securing additional funding should be a top priority.
- Limited retail opportunities.** The vibrancy of Center City is rooted in a mix of land uses—including housing, office and entertainment—but it lacks a critical mass of retail. The area's many attractions bring out residents, visitors and workers during evening hours, but Uptown has not been as successful in establishing itself as a daytime shopping destination. A recent inventory identified almost

two million square feet of available retail space in Center City with approximately 378,000 square feet of additional space proposed or under construction. However, only 39,000 square feet of retail space is allocated to providing shoppers with goods that residents, workers and visitors desire. Uptown shops compete with well-established suburban shopping malls, and the majority of existing retailers focus on providing convenience goods. In addition, much of the Center City's existing retail space is inwardly focused and does not contribute to a bustling downtown shopping experience.

- Accommodating future growth.** Adequate amounts of utilities, including water, power and sewer, must be available to serve Center City's future growth. For a City established more than 200 years ago, Charlotte's infrastructure system is in relatively good condition. Still, there are areas with aging infrastructure that will need to be addressed to accommodate new development. Challenges include uncertainty about pipeline conditions and materials, as well as the operability of valves and hydrants for the water system.



The I-77/I-277 freeway loop creates a physical and perceptual disconnect between Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods.



Building the Future: The Economic Foundation

The long-term vitality and sustainability of Center City hinge on its ability to **maintain and build upon the existing foundation of jobs, commerce and business activity while diversifying into strategic growth sectors**. The ability to successfully grow existing and new companies, expand markets, and cultivate a diverse, talented workforce will in part determine if Center City will achieve its vision and goals in the coming years.

EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

While finance has been a primary economic driver for Charlotte, the overall economy is somewhat diversified with significant employment concentrations in professional services, retail trade, wholesale trade and manufacturing. By comparison, Center City's employment base is much more heavily concentrated in Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE), Public Administration, and Transportation and Utilities. Center City is headquarters to three Fortune 500 companies, including Bank of America (13,900 employees), Wells Fargo/Wachovia Bank (20,000 employees) and Duke Energy (7,800 employees). In addition, four of the region's seven other top employers have a large presence in Center City. These include the Carolinas Health Care System (26,300 employees), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (19,800 employees), Presbyterian Regional Healthcare (9,000 employees) and Charlotte and Mecklenburg County Government (7,500 employees). Sectors with the weakest representation in Center City are construction (approximately 4% of

total County employment), wholesale/retail trade (6%) and manufacturing (9%). Further strengthening and diversification of employment sectors will be critical for a balanced economy (*Sources: Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, BAE*).

REGIONAL TRENDS

The Charlotte Regional Partnership identifies six major target sectors that have the strongest long-term prospects for regional economic growth. The sectors include:

- **Finance.** Charlotte is often referred to as the second most important financial services center in the United States, after New York City. Financial services and insurance activities account for one-third of the Gross Domestic Product for the Charlotte metro area. This is by far the most significant sector in the region, and in Uptown specifically, in terms of long-term employment growth and related impacts on the commercial real estate market.
- **Health.** This sector comprises medical device manufacturing, biotech, and pharmaceutical research and health administration (including insurance and back office support). Though not as strong as the North Carolina Research Triangle in terms of biotech uses, Charlotte has a strong health care sector and is an increasingly important center for biotech and bioinformatics research and development through UNCC. The UNCC Uptown Center offers masters degree programs in Health Accountancy and Public Health.

- **Energy.** Home to Duke Energy, the region has a diversified energy generation industry and research and development cluster anchored by the UNCC Energy Production Research Center, as well as the Lee College of Engineering and Electric Power Research Institute's research and development headquarters.
- **Defense.** The Charlotte region has approximately 1,000 companies with defense contracts with a focus on performance materials, fuel and power systems, military vehicles, and aerospace components. Firms and employment in Center City currently comprise a small share of this sector.
- **Motorsports.** Although it is unclear how many jobs motorsports generate in the regional economy, the Charlotte region is home to approximately 90 percent of all NASCAR teams. Most importantly for Uptown, the NASCAR Hall of Fame provides a new draw for visitors from around the United States.
- **Film.** The Charlotte Regional Partnership estimates the annual economic impact of this sector to the region at \$500 million. It is unclear what impact, if any, this sector will have on specific economic opportunities in Center City.

Finally, the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce identifies higher education as an important element in developing jobs in the following target industries: aviation, bioscience, computer software engineering, logistics/distribution, optics and plastics manufacturing. These areas should also be considered as Center City strives to bolster its position in the greater regional, national and global economies.



Local corporate and institutional resources can help make renewable energy production a burgeoning economic sector for Charlotte.



The NASCAR Hall of Fame represents a sector that can be leveraged for further growth.



The healthcare and health-related industries have a strong and growing presence in greater Charlotte.



The Charlotte Regional Partnership is working to create a sustainable template to measure the economic impact of the film industry in the 16-county region.



Ideas on Center City's assets, challenges, opportunities and overall vision were recorded in real time during Community Workshop #1.



Workshop participants provided input and feedback at microphones, on comment cards and at interactive idea stations.



More than 200 people participated in the community visioning workshop from remote locations via the internet and CLT Blog.

2020 Planning Process

Similar to the 2010 Vision Plan effort, the 2020 Vision Plan reflects the needs, ideas and creativity of Charlotteans. Input and feedback were gathered through an interactive planning process with a multi-faceted media, communications and community engagement strategy. A series of community workshops, neighborhood meetings, committee sessions, and working groups was bolstered with a project website, social media, speaker series, newspaper articles, radio interviews and cable television programs.

The 2020 Vision Plan process was organized in three major phases, including:

- Phase I: Existing Conditions Assessment/ Articulation of Vision.** The first phase of the planning process focused on review of previous and concurrent planning efforts and studies; data collection and analysis; identification of assets, issues and challenges; and community visioning.
- Phase II: Plan Strategies, Projects and Programs.** The second phase of the process was devoted to developing the overarching plan framework and specific strategies and concepts.
- Phase III: Draft and Final Center City 2020 Vision Plan.** The final phase of the planning process included refinement, documentation and prioritization of the results from the first two phases. The 2020 Vision Plan combines the overall vision with specific recommended policies, programs and projects to create a comprehensive development concept for Center City Charlotte.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

More than 800 participants attended public meetings between October 2009 and November 2010 to develop ideas and provide input on the 2020 vision, goals, recommendations and implementation strategies. Three workshops were hosted at the Charlotte Convention Center and provided opportunities for virtual participation via social media and blogging sites.

- Community Workshop #1: Visioning.** The first session engaged the community and businesses in the development of a vision for the next decade of growth and development in Center City. The workshop was highly interactive and provided a collection of activities, a presentation, and facilitated community discussion.
- Community Workshop #2: Review Plan Direction and Framework.** At the second community workshop, the project team presented and garnered feedback on the preferred plan direction and framework. The workshop included a large group presentation and discussion, as well as small group breakout sessions to provide input on emerging recommendations.
- Community Workshop #3: Review Draft Plan.** A final community workshop was held to present the draft 2020 Vision Plan recommendations. Workshop participants provided comments on the overall plan organization, specific strategies and refined projects.

STEERING COMMITTEE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

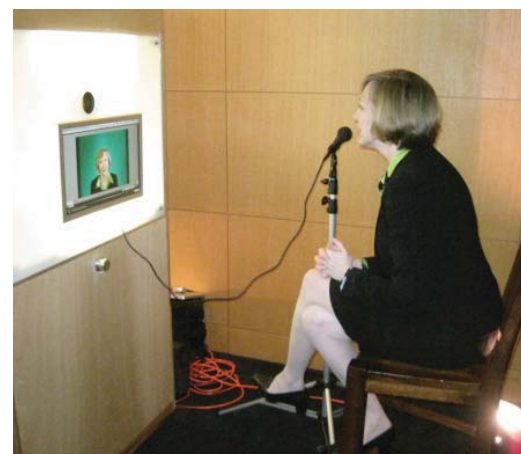
The Steering Committee for the 2020 Vision Plan included key stakeholders representing major employers, landowners, neighborhoods, schools and citizen organizations from all over Mecklenburg County. A series of Steering Committee meetings was held throughout the planning process to help articulate the vision; create the strategy framework; review and provide input on plan alternatives and strategies; and review, refine and confirm the draft and final plan products. Additional stakeholder engagement included more than a dozen individual and group stakeholder interviews, several neighborhood meetings, and a charrette with local professionals in the fields of planning and design.



A group of local professionals participated in a session with the project team to explore planning and design options related to several development focus areas.



Community workshops included formal and informal activities to gather participant input related to values, vision, goals and specific plan recommendations.



Video Voices—a video and sound booth—provided a unique opportunity for participants to share their personal vision for Center City with the larger community.



Working group members and workshop participants discussed ideas related to several topic areas, including Transportation and Mobility.



The Technical and Steering committees provided valuable input and feedback throughout the 2020 Vision Plan process.

WORKING GROUPS

During the generation of the plan alternatives and strategies, five working groups were formed to discuss, analyze and more completely develop specific plan recommendations related to the following five topic areas:

- Transportation and Mobility.
- Urban Living.
- Economic Vitality.
- Arts, Culture and Entertainment.
- Parks, Recreation and Environment.

Each working group met twice during Phase II of the planning process. The first meeting was a facilitated brainstorming session, after which working group members independently researched one or more ideas. At the second working group meeting, ideas were presented and prioritized for consideration in the final plan recommendations.

Many of the working group ideas are incorporated into the 2020 Vision Plan including, but not limited to, recommendations for increasing urban agriculture; promoting community diversity; better linking parks and recreational amenities; capping the freeway; celebrating connections between the four wards; exploring a funding district for arts and cultural facilities; bolstering the role of Uptown religious institutions; encouraging more food festivals; carsharing; linking higher education via transit; and creating additional housing options.

TECHNICAL REVIEW AND INPUT

A Technical Committee, comprising staff from multiple agencies, departments and organizations, met periodically throughout the 2020 Vision Plan process to provide detailed expert knowledge of Charlotte's Center City, review technical elements of the 2020 Vision Plan, and evaluate alternatives. Technical Committee input was supplemented with ongoing individual and group meetings with key staff members, as well as an Urban Land Institute Technical Advisory Panel focused on the potential of the West Trade corridor.

ADDITIONAL OUTREACH

Several additional outreach tools were employed throughout the planning process to increase participation and facilitate input and feedback. An online presence was established for the project with an interactive website (www.centercity2020.info), social media accounts, and blog postings. Charlotte Center City Partners also teamed with UNCC College of Arts and Architecture to sponsor a speakers series focused on topics related to urban design and development.

Summary

The vision expressed by the community is one of a vibrant, prosperous future. With many building blocks in place—and a focus on ensuring future economic health—Center City is poised to evolve as the dynamic center of a thriving metropolis, one that is on par with the best downtowns in the country. The elements of the 2020 Vision Plan set the stage for the next decade of growth and change in Center City.



chapter 2:
vision framework

chapter 2: vision framework

The Vision Framework establishes the blueprint for how Center City Charlotte will grow and evolve over the next decade and beyond. It answers questions such as: What are our core values as a community? How do those values translate to a commonly held vision for the future? What should the physical environment of Center City look and feel like? And how should Center City function, so that it is an attractive place that also makes us happy, healthy and productive?

The Vision Framework reflects community input collected throughout the planning and design process. Guided by this framework, the remainder of the 2020 Vision Plan articulates big ideas and bold moves, as well as specific recommendations for policies, projects and programs necessary to achieve the desired vision, support plan goals and direct future development decisions for Center City.

The Vision Framework is built upon the foundation of the 2010 Vision Plan, including an **Enduring Vision** cultivated during that planning process. The Vision Framework is also predicated on a set of **Values**, which express what community members consider to be Center City's most intrinsic and treasured characteristics. The **2020 Vision**, stemming from the 2010 Vision, articulates how the community envisions the future pattern of physical, economic and social development for Center City. A set of **Goals** describes the direction for future policies, projects and programs to fulfill the vision. Finally, these items are integral to the **Vision Framework Diagram**, which illustrates the Goals and sets up the plan structure, including Transformative Strategies and Focus Areas that will bring about tangible change in the coming years.

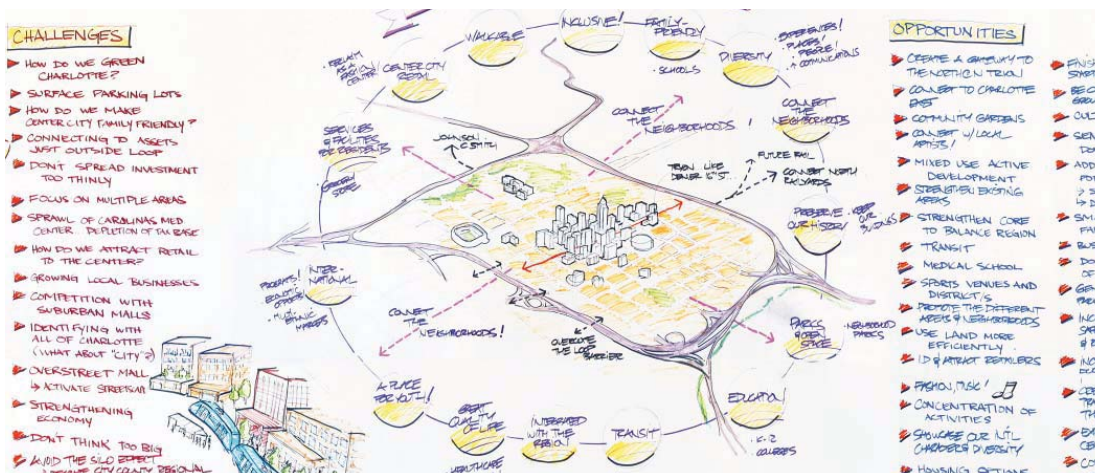
2010 Enduring Vision

An "enduring vision" for Center City was established in 2000 during the 2010 Vision Plan process. Transcending any given community process or planning horizon, **this overarching vision is timeless and will always be critical to the success of Center City.** The 2010 Vision Plan's recommendations are based on a vision "to create a livable and memorable Center City of distinct neighborhoods connected by unique infrastructure." The enduring vision is:

Center City is **viable, livable and memorable.**

- Make Center City Charlotte more attractive by stimulating its street activities, creating interesting urban spaces and architecture, and by enhancing its role as a destination.
- Make Center City Charlotte more sustainable by promoting growth and jobs of different types.
- Make Center City Charlotte more livable by linking neighborhoods, creating or better defining neighborhood centers with stores, services and open spaces.
- Make Center City Charlotte more diverse and affordable by providing a wider range of housing options.
- Make Center City memorable and easily recognizable by emphasizing bold, ambitious moves such as capping the I-277 freeway loop.
- Support the uniqueness of existing neighborhoods, but also recognize the value in distinct neighborhoods such as a sports and entertainment district.

The 2020 Vision Plan builds on the 2010 Vision, continuing the momentum of past investments and accomplishments while incorporating the aspirations, needs and values of today's community.



Values

Values articulate the **characteristics, aspirations and moral attributes the community desires**. The Vision Framework is grounded in the following set of values expressed by Charlotteans and commonly agreed to during the planning process (listed in alphabetical order).

Accessibility. People of all ages, genders, races, incomes, sexualities and physical abilities can participate in Center City's offerings.

Affordability. A variety of live, work and play options for people of all income levels.

Aspiration. A strong desire for a better future.

Business Friendly. Policies, practices and a skilled workforce that make doing business in Center City attractive.

Connectivity. Strong physical and programmatic connections with few barriers between all Center City neighborhoods and key destinations.

Culture. The unique way of life, customs and beliefs of Charlotteans, as well as access to various forms of art, theater, performance and music.

Diversity. Celebration of the differences between individuals and groups in Center City.

Ecological Sustainability. Stewardship of the environment and the capacity of Center City's ecosystems to maintain their essential functions, processes and biodiversity over the long-term.

Economic Stimulation. Generation of job opportunities, retail and other income-producing activities.

Education and Learning. Formal and informal opportunities for lifelong learning and intellectual growth.

Entrepreneurship. Willingness to initiate new and innovative business ventures.

Family Orientation. Housing, schools, dining, venues, recreation and programming for everyone.

Fun. Activities and events that provide amusement, entertainment and enjoyment.

Great Design. Aesthetic, functional and architectural excellence in the public and private realms.

Historic Preservation. Maintenance, rehabilitation and/or adaptive reuse of historic properties and landmarks.

Inclusivity. Options for living, working and participation for people of all ages, genders, races, incomes, sexual orientation and physical abilities.

Innovation. The pursuit of new ideas, methods or approaches.

Memorable. Intriguing and remarkable people, places and events unique to Charlotte.

Neighborhood Character. Preservation of the defining qualities abundant in Center City's neighborhoods.

Pride. Charlotte's strong feeling of worth and respect for Center City and its users.

Resiliency. The ability and willingness to thrive in the face of adversity.

Urban Life. Promotion of character, attractions and activities that result in an energetic, interesting and entertaining environment.

Walkability. A consistently positive pedestrian experience characterized by visual interest, comfort, safety, ample amenities and a high density of destinations.

Welcoming and Gracious. Hospitality and a sense of belonging afforded to new residents and visitors.



The Charlotte community is a unique blend of new and long-time residents, some home-grown and many moving from other cities, regions and countries. The values presented here reflect the community's characteristics, aspirations and moral attributes.

2020 Vision

The 2020 Vision advances the 2010 Vision by incorporating sustainability as an integral part of Center City's present and future. Sustainability relates to our environmental and ecological health, as well as to our social and economic vibrancy. The long-term viability, livability and memorability of Center City will depend on Charlotte's success in becoming more sustainable. As such, recommendations to create a more sustainable Center City are integrated throughout the Plan and across all framework elements. The 2020 Vision is:

Charlotte's Center City will be a **viable** and **livable** community whose extraordinary built environment, interconnected tapestry of neighborhoods and thriving businesses create a **memorable** and **sustainable** place.

- Located in the heart of a growing region, Center City remains an **intimate yet cosmopolitan hub** for global business headquarters; educational institutions; medical centers; arts, sports and entertainment venues; and government. Charlotte embraces itself as a modern city while staying true to the core values that anchor its unique feel and character.
- **Economic opportunities abound**, attracting and retaining people and imagination to a region known for its quality of life, affordable living and family-friendly urban neighborhoods. Center City Charlotte is where people live and work who seek to spur innovation, think creatively and build their futures.
- Center City boasts an intricate and accessible system of parks, plazas, greens, complete streets, trails and open spaces, which knit together the urban core and adjacent neighborhoods, making Charlotte **one of the greenest, most sustainable and healthy cities** in North America.
- Fostering strong, cooperative relationships among its four Uptown wards and the surrounding areas, **all of Center City's neighborhoods are in balance and interconnected** with commercial and social centers, retail services, parks and recreation, access to schools, and efficient transportation. More than the hub of a greater Charlotte community, Center City neighborhoods are its heart.





Goals

The following eight goals serve as the basis for articulating **future design and development concepts** and prioritizing **new policies, projects and programs for Center City**. The goals build upon the community values and were developed in collaboration with community and business leaders, Center City neighbors, and other stakeholders. Goal statements describe how Center City Charlotte will look, feel and function in the year 2020.

GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability



Center City is an attractive, comfortable and **sustainable urban setting** that is easy to navigate and get around, regardless of transportation mode. Private development contributes to a public realm that encourages exploration, communication and innovation. Great design and sustainability are integrated into all aspects of streets and open spaces. From building design, construction materials and stormwater management to purchasing and recycling, Center City reflects an ethic of environmental stewardship. Infrastructure is designed to enhance the public realm and minimize use of nonrenewable resources and waste while supporting green choices.

GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine



Center City continues to grow its position as the **primary economic engine and diversified employment hub** of the region. The City's cultural and entertainment opportunities—along with an affordable cost of living, educational system, climate, cleanliness and strong civic leadership—attract new businesses, entrepreneurs and young professionals. Banking and hospitality institutions continue to serve as the economic backbone, while new technologies and emerging markets bring greater prosperity and investment to Center City.

GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning



Center City offers a **full range of educational opportunities** for citizens at every stage of their lives. Center City's many outstanding K-12 schools, colleges and universities continue to offer excellent, innovative academics and enhance the human capital of the City and region. An educated and well-trained workforce contributes to Center City's standing as the economic hub of the region and a major competitor for national and international enterprise and industry. Formal and informal learning opportunities abound for residents and visitors of all ages.

GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



Center City remains the region's major **arts, culture, sports, entertainment and nightlife destination**. Center City is the premier location for artists, museums, performers and venues. Visitors feel welcomed by the hospitality of local residents and businesses, and are presented with a wide variety of unique attractions for all ages. A range of accommodations and amenities supports Center City's diverse offerings of cultural, entertainment and conference facilities.

GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



Center City provides **housing and amenities for people and families of all cultures, ages and incomes**. Neighborhoods inside and outside the freeway loop have robust commercial centers, cultural facilities, parks and schools. New residential development—including workforce and affordable housing—reflects the architectural heritage of the City with appropriate density, scale and design located close to public transit, employment opportunities and shopping. Development sensitively transitions from higher- to lower-intensity, respecting the scale, design and intimacy of adjacent wards and neighborhoods.

GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities



Center City maintains an **interconnected system of parks, open space and recreational facilities** that supports healthy and active lifestyles. Parks are within walking distance of all housing, connected by trails, pathways and open spaces. Opportunities are provided to safely and conveniently walk or bike to major Center City destinations. The design of the Center City park system is integrated with that of other urban infrastructure (such as streets and transit), incorporates the most current environmental sustainability practices, and connects with parks and open spaces throughout the Charlotte Region.

GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants



Center City offers **distinctive, niche retail and restaurant offerings** that complement and support all that goes on in Center City. Retail shops, groceries, cafés and restaurants serve the daily needs of residents, workers and visitors, making Center City a compact and vibrant 24-hour activity center. A strategic mix of local, regional and national proprietors helps distinguish these unique urban and neighborhood commercial centers from other regional destinations.

GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System

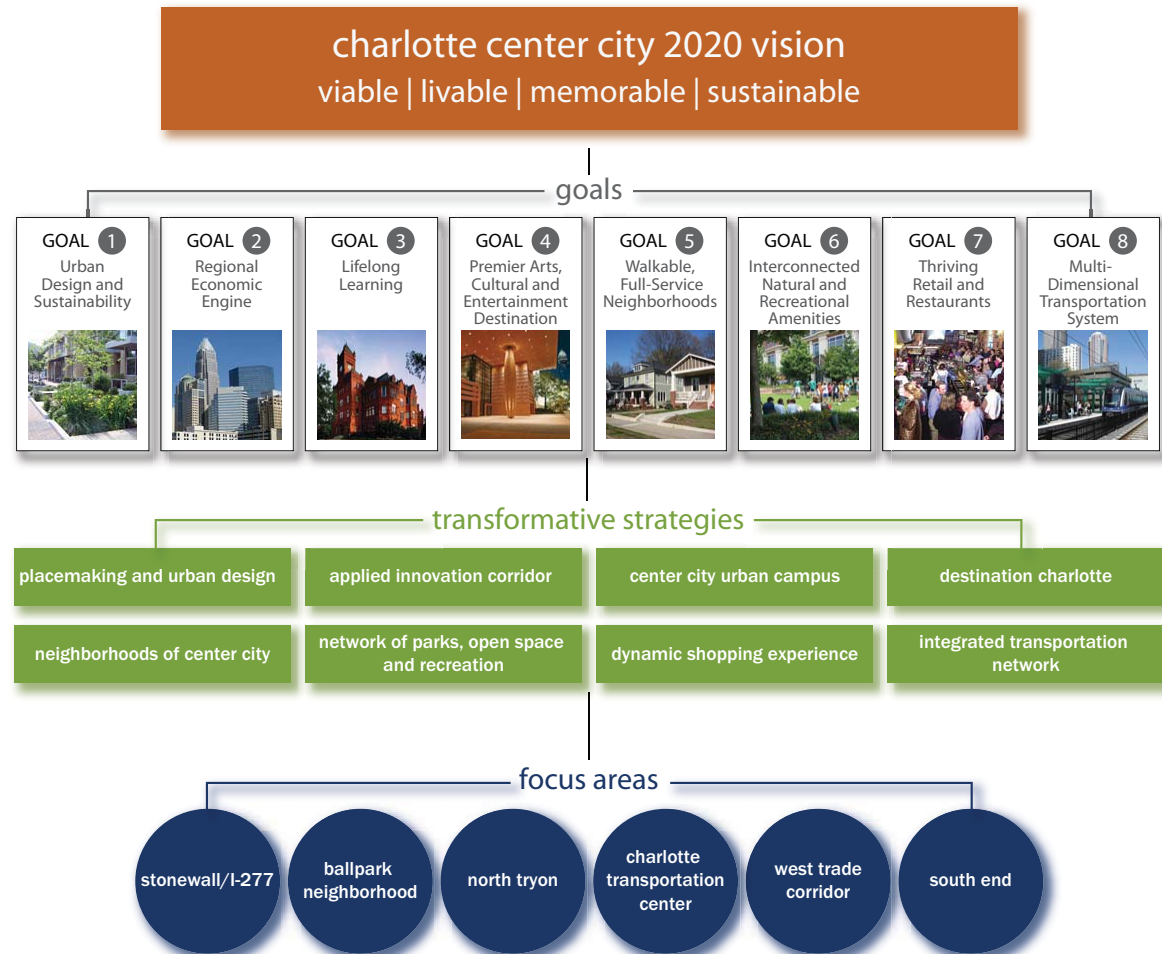


Center City is the **hub of local and regional multi-modal transportation**, including facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, bus, streetcar, light rail, high speed rail, motor vehicles, air and freight. Center City supports existing and new development with well-designed and maintained streets, pathways, transit and end-of-trip facilities. The strategic location of Center City and its abundance of transportation facilities provide seamless access and mobility to all destinations.

Vision Framework Diagram

The Vision Framework Diagram at right illustrates how **the Vision and Goals inform and guide the 2020 Vision Plan recommendations**. As described, the Vision and Goals are a synthesis of the community input received throughout the planning process. Together they represent the desired future for Center City.

The remaining elements of the Vision Framework Diagram highlight the specific recommendations that are described in detail in the following chapters. The recommendations articulate what, where and how the vision will become a reality. Chapter 3 outlines eight Transformative Strategies that will propel Center City toward achieving the Goals with a collection of specific projects, policies and programs. Chapter 4 details six Focus Areas for future development and redevelopment that will catalyze significant change in support of the 2020 Vision. Together, the elements of the Vision Framework Diagram chart the course for the next decade of growth and prosperity in Charlotte Center City.





chapter 3:
transformative strategies

chapter 3: transformative strategies

The 2020 Vision Plan recommendations are strategic, broadly supported directions that will together transform the future of Center City. They build upon the Vision Framework as well as the goals and actions of past planning initiatives, including the 2010 Vision Plan; the City of Charlotte's Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework; specific area plans; and other planning and design projects. The recommendations

respond to goals articulated by Envision: Charlotte—the public-private collaboration that is leading Charlotte to become a global model for environmental sustainability. The recommendations are also derived from community outreach, specific design analysis, best practices research and technical studies that were conducted throughout the 2020 Vision Plan process.

Overarching Recommendations

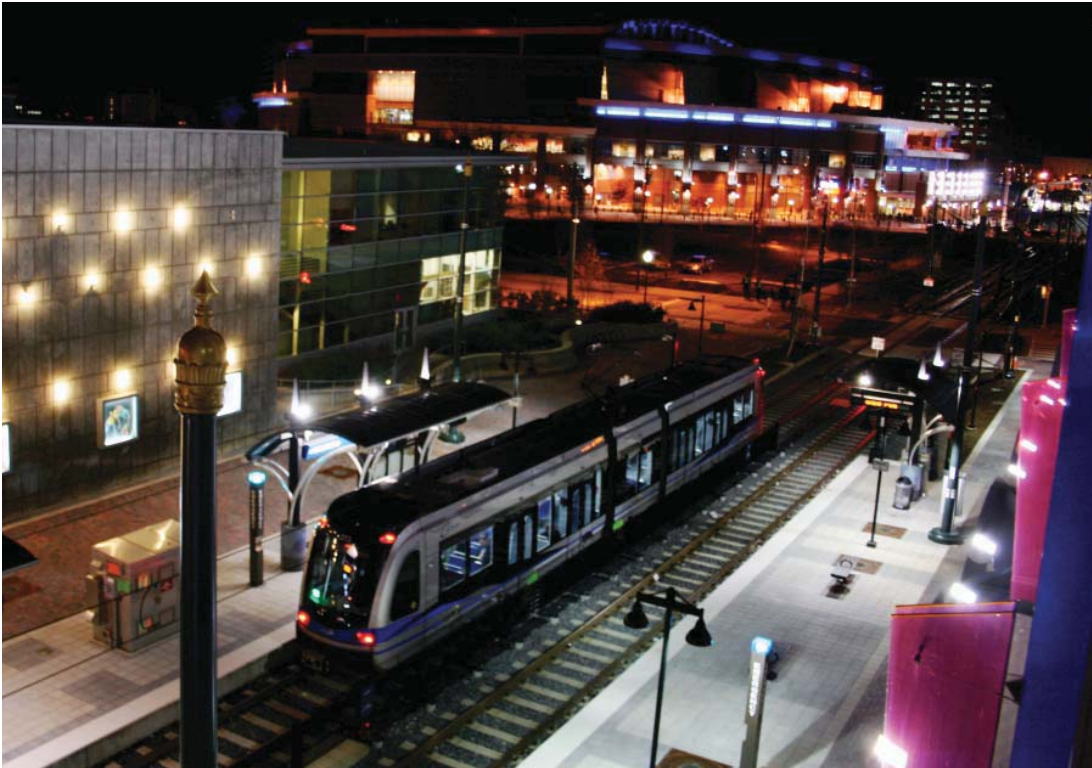
Several integrated, high-level recommendations bind together the plan's specific initiatives and actions. These recommendations—grouped under the key elements of the 2020 vision: Viable, Livable, Memorable and Sustainable—must all work together to achieve the vision for Center City.

VIABLE

Center City must strengthen its position as the economic engine and employment center of the region with a greater diversity of industries and job opportunities. Physical development and redevelopment at strategic locations, as well as strengthening the connections between higher education and business ventures, will be critical.

Overarching recommendations include:

- Create mixed-use employment centers at the Gateway Station and a redeveloped Charlotte Transportation Center.
- Redevelop the commercial and industrial areas north of Uptown as a 21st century urban industrial park and neighborhood.
- Continue to create a critical mass of urban density by concentrating high-rise office development along Trade and Tryon streets.
- Establish stronger physical and programmatic linkages between Center City's educational institutions, employers and destinations.



LIVABLE

Center City must provide a broad range of housing opportunities. A variety of price points, ownership and rental options, sizes, and styles at optimal locations is needed. The range of housing must complement existing neighborhoods and attract a greater number and diversity of residents to activate the urban core around-the-clock. Overarching recommendations include:

- Preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods with the concentrated development of high-density mixed-use neighborhood centers.
- Encourage high-density housing in Uptown and along major transportation corridors.
- Support and facilitate existing development plans to create mixed-use urban villages in First Ward, Second Ward, South End and the area north of Uptown.
- Promote affordable and workforce housing as a component of all residential projects in Center City, especially those on government-owned land or resulting from public-private partnerships.
- Reduce homelessness and unemployment in Center City and the greater Charlotte region by providing new employment, services and housing opportunities.

To remain livable, **Center City must also have a seamless system of multi-modal transportation choices that serves residents, workers and visitors.** Such a network is a prerequisite of a great city. Overarching recommendations include:

- Support and facilitate continued implementation of the 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan.
- Manage parking, employ state-of-the-art transportation demand management tools and enhance transportation options to decrease dependence on driving, greatly increase transit use, and make biking and walking viable choices.
- Continue to develop fixed-route transit—light rail, streetcar and high speed rail—as a complement to rubber tire bus and the Gold Rush trolley.
- Improve mobility opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling to and within Center City, with a particular emphasis on enhanced connectivity between Uptown and the surrounding Center City neighborhoods.

MEMORABLE

Center City's physical context must evolve for it to become a truly great urban environment.

Charlotteans must be able to live, work, attend school, dine, sightsee, recreate, socialize and play within the urban core—the premier downtowns of the world all offer this rich mix of activities and experiences.

- Develop integrated, intuitive systems of circulation and recreation, as well as places for shopping and gathering throughout Center City.
- Employ high-quality materials and great design for public and private spaces to ensure that all development contributes to an attractive, walkable and memorable place.





Sustainable approaches to streetscape design, building development and urban mobility are key elements of the 2020 Vision Plan.

- Mitigate the visual and physical barriers associated with the freeway loop, surface parking lots and other infrastructure.
- Concentrate high-density development within Uptown and along major arterials; ensure that building height, scale and massing transition appropriately to existing neighborhoods.

SUSTAINABLE

Center City must achieve environmental and social sustainability to remain attractive, competitive and viable over time. The area cannot thrive without a long-term view for maintaining and enhancing the environment and people who make up Center City. Overarching recommendations include:

- Reduce energy use in Uptown Charlotte's business community by up to 20% and eliminate 220,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions by 2015.
- Manage stormwater runoff with existing infrastructure and a combination of new green space, streets with integrated stormwater management, and green roofs.

Organization of Recommendations

The 2020 Vision Plan's remaining recommendations are divided into two major sections: **Transformative Strategies and Focus Areas**. Together, these two sets of recommendations highlight the physical and programmatic strategies required to support the overarching recommendations and advance the Vision Framework. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the Transformative Strategies. The Focus Areas appear in Chapter 4: Focus Areas.

TRANSFORMATIVE STRATEGIES

Eight strategic directives are identified to elevate Center City's position among the great urban centers and attract new residents, employers and visitors. When implemented, these strategies will ensure the community's vision for Center City is realized. The Transformative Strategies include:

- Placemaking and Urban Design.
- Applied Innovation Corridor.
- Center City Urban Campus.
- Destination Charlotte.
- Neighborhoods of Center City.
- Network of Parks, Open Space and Recreation.
- Dynamic Shopping Experience.
- Integrated Transportation Network.

placemaking and urban design

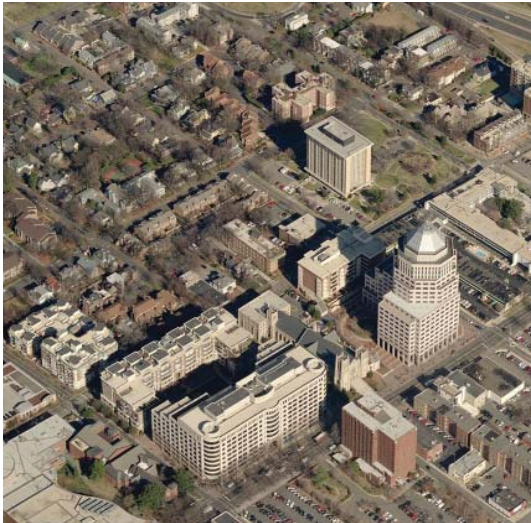
Envision a distinctively designed Center City, one that is walkable, well-connected and memorable. Great parks, greenway trails and plazas are framed by well-designed buildings and filled with people enjoying a variety of activities. Radiating from the spines of Trade and Tryon streets, the street-level experience is vibrant and comfortable, with bustling ground floors, parks and activities that are inviting to pedestrians and create numerous economic development opportunities. The infrastructure of city blocks, streets and transit seamlessly links together all neighborhoods with easy connections and sensitive transitions. Great placemaking and urban design create a rich Center City environment that is distinctly Charlotte and welcoming to all.

Existing Situation

Great cities are places where buildings are designed to accommodate interesting activities and to create memorable and comfortable spaces. Human-scale components are distinct yet interwoven. Great cities have streets that are more than paths for cars but are also places of pedestrian interest and movement, inviting people to explore what's happening down each block and around every corner. Great cities have a diversity of residents, workers and visitors that energizes the public spaces, providing an ever-changing spectacle that moves with different cadences. Such places narrate our history through the permanence of some structures and the freshness of others, resulting in serendipity and shared experiences.

Center City's physical environment—its streets and sidewalks, parks and plazas, art and amenities, and buildings, façades and skyline—greatly affects community interactions and shapes the daily lives of residents. Indeed, every decision about what, where and how to build—and preserve—the setting of Center City influences everyday behaviors, as well as long-term perceptions of the place.





Fourth Ward in Uptown showcases pedestrian-friendly buildings and spaces that speak to the best urban qualities of Center City.



Infill projects must be developed to “fill in the gaps” and extend the active pedestrian environment.

Uptown Charlotte is a modern, contemporary place with few historic buildings surrounded by beautiful neighborhoods with traditional architecture and a lush tree canopy. This juxtaposition is quite unusual among similarly-sized cities. The Uptown portion of Tryon Street, in particular, embodies the best urban qualities of Center City—buildings and spaces are pedestrian-friendly, people and cars invigorate the street, and old structures rub shoulders with recent ones within a breathtaking skyline. The corridor projects a great sense of scale, identity and architecture. The experience of strolling to a restaurant, walking between business meetings or people-watching along the street is a pleasure.

Unfortunately, the great urban character of Tryon does not extend much beyond its main stretch in the heart of Center City. Other Uptown areas have yet to realize their potential. An abundance of surface parking, overhead pedestrian skywalks, empty building edges, blank walls, and vacant parcels drains life and activity from many streets. Sections of roadway that once linked neighborhoods have been broken—particularly by the freeway loop—resulting in a fragmented sense of place and confusion in getting around.

Indeed, the walkable core along Tryon is relatively small, so every move radiating outward has a big impact. Great design of each new building, street and open space in Uptown is critical.

Opportunities and Challenges

There are many valuable assets that can be built upon to further enhance Center City’s placemaking and urban design. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Utilize the significant amount of underdeveloped land inside the I-77/I-277 freeway loop for new development.
- Develop infill projects to “fill in the gaps” along city blocks and extend the strength and character of Tryon Street to other parts of Uptown to attract pedestrian activity and enhance Center City’s identity.
- Enhance Uptown’s impressive skyline and compact downtown environment with strategic, well-placed, high-quality building projects and viewshed guidelines that maintain visibility of Uptown’s skyline and new corridors.
- Increase environmental sustainability through “green” design, construction and rehabilitation.
- Create great public spaces—streets, parks and plazas—that are activated by and integrated with surrounding buildings and green spaces.
- Improve connectivity between Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods and the larger Charlotte region by capitalizing on investments in transit, greenway trails and sidewalks.
- Enhance Center City’s urban viewsheds by establishing guidelines that maintain visibility of Uptown’s skyline and new corridors.

- Continue to improve orientation and navigation to and within Center City, using the new pedestrian and vehicle wayfinding system implemented in South End and Uptown as a model.
- Integrate the various urban systems, such as transportation, open space and recreation, so that they work together to achieve multiple objectives.
- Promote and build upon the unique situation of Uptown's modern, dense and bold downtown environment surrounded by beautiful historic neighborhoods.

Center City faces challenges to achieve the desired vision for placemaking and urban design. Specific **challenges** include:

- Location of existing surface parking lots and underutilized parcels that detract from the pedestrian environment.
- Existing inactive spaces on the ground floor of parking garages and office buildings that create an uninviting pedestrian experience and inhibit retail development opportunities.
- Hidden over-street and underground walkways that block views and drain pedestrian activity from streets.
- Limited private capital and other financial resources to develop existing surface parking lots and vacant and/or underutilized property in the near term.
- Developments that focus commercial uses inward rather than providing easy street access or active ground floors along the sidewalk.
- I-77/I-277 freeway barrier between Uptown and the other Center City neighborhoods.
- A general public that is often not engaged in urban design issues.
- An inconsistent and fragmented approach to the architecture and urban design of structures in Center City.

Recommendations

Center City will be transformed into a great urban environment through **attentive design of its public spaces and a thoughtful approach to its development patterns**. The following recommendations and physical strategies are tailored to help guide this evolution. Together, they support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

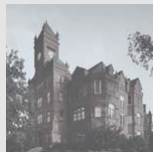
GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability



GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine



GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning



GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities

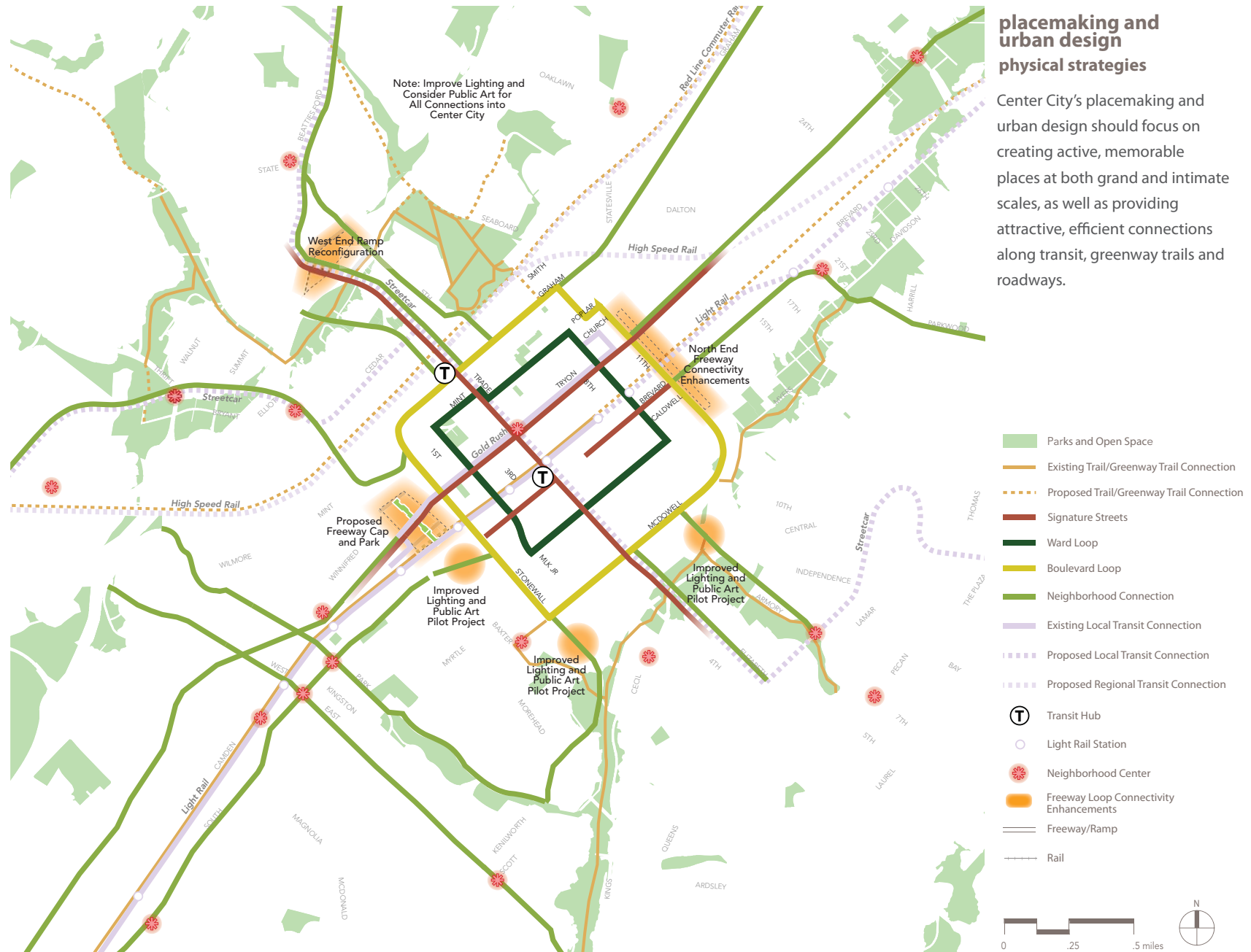


GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants

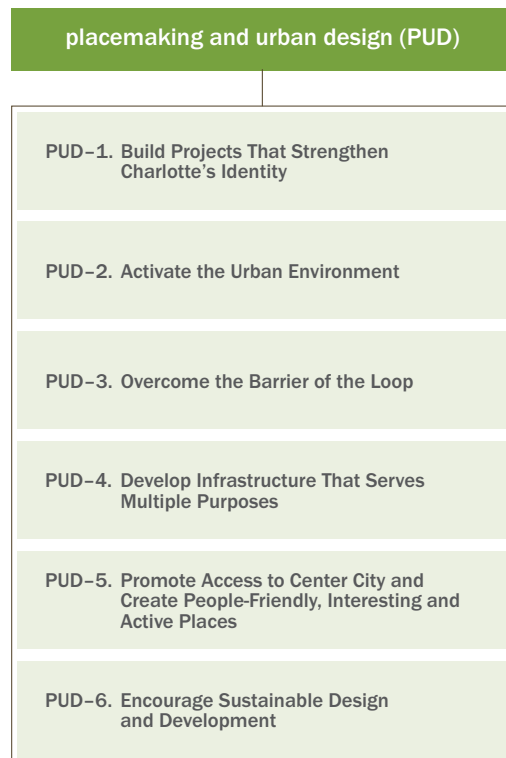


GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System





placemaking and urban design recommendations



PUD-1. Build Projects That Strengthen Charlotte's Identity

Center City's urban experience will be enriched by targeted development opportunities that have the potential to spark long-term economic growth and physical redevelopment throughout Charlotte's core (see Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail). Building design should advance the city's unique, iconic and modern architecture while integrating into the surrounding urban fabric. With strong consideration and investment given toward the contextual design of buildings—including the streetscape improvements, park and plaza upgrades, new transit and bike facilities, pedestrian lighting, and more—new projects can help link together neighborhoods and foster greater pedestrian activity.

PUD-1a. Build a distinctive gateway and civic gathering space at the proposed freeway cap.

As a dynamic new focal point in Charlotte, the proposed freeway cap would become the city's ceremonial community gathering place, hosting seasonal festivals, concerts and celebrations while providing a meaningful connection between neighborhoods that are currently divided by the freeway loop. Nearby employment and civic uses should be linked by a high-quality pedestrian environment. Investment in the park and adjoining streetscape will, in turn, spark additional private development along its borders and along adjacent streets. The freeway cap will be an exciting destination—with world-class open space design framed by dramatic building architecture—that attracts people from around the region and country.

PUD-1b. Redevelop the Charlotte Transportation Center as an iconic entry portal into the city. A

new Charlotte Transportation Center in the location of the existing facility provides an opportunity to create a mixed-use, multi-modal entry portal into Charlotte that is visually striking and helps activate adjacent public space and development (see Charlotte Transportation Center section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

PUD-1c. Enhance the image of Charlotte as the

"City of Trees." Many Center City neighborhoods are characterized by a well-established urban tree canopy. Continued funding for maintenance is critical to keeping these trees healthy and to improve urban air quality. Future investments in Uptown's parks and public rights-of-way should include sufficient funding for tree planting and programs to ensure ongoing maintenance.



The creation of signature projects, such as the Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago's Millennium Park, will help to strengthen the identity of Center City and greater Charlotte.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-2. Activate the Urban Environment

The urban environment includes the places, destinations and amenities that combine to form the Center City experience. Streets, sidewalks, plazas, open spaces and structures are all building blocks of the urban environment. Activating these spaces in meaningful and interesting ways will make Center City a better place to live, work, play and visit. An activated public realm—complete with outdoor dining, artful window displays, pedestrian-scaled lighting, captivating built form and quality, comfortable street furniture—will encourage people to linger and explore their downtown.



Outdoor dining, active retail and an attractive streetscape are all important to make Center City more pedestrian-friendly.

PUD-2a. Provide opportunities for outdoor dining, public art, street furnishings, information booths, vendors and landscaping. Wide sidewalks should provide ample room for street trees and other landscaping, transit shelters, benches, public art, drinking fountains and more, while also allowing businesses like cafés and retail boutiques to “spill out” into the public realm. Investing in streetscape is a good way to quickly improve the quality and livability of public areas. Food kiosks and other vendors are important to drawing people to these beautified spaces.



Public art should be encouraged throughout the area to create interest and activate the urban environment.

PUD-2b. Continue to encourage visible and active uses at the ground floor of buildings.

Attractive and interesting retail shops, restaurants and other uses should line the ground floors of buildings to energize the streets, particularly at key intersections and corners. This works best by blurring the line between public and private realms with transparent and accessible ground floors. Blank walls or empty, cavernous indoor areas at the ground level detract from street life. Existing standards should be bolstered with restrictions to disallow passive lobbies and circulation along ground-floor edges. Design standards for upper-story façades should be explored for corridors within transit-oriented development, destination districts and shopping areas to add another dimension to the liveliness and interest at the street level.

PUD-2c. Ensure that buildings are designed to promote a well-scaled, pedestrian-friendly environment and to harmoniously integrate with their surroundings. Attention to building form and design is a significant way to transform Center City in enduring and profound ways. A building's volume, massing and articulation should be designed in a way that is inviting to passers-by and makes pedestrians feel comfortable walking along the street. Buildings should also be designed to relate to and complement nearby structures, while allowing for bold and creative architecture. This would help establish a sense of continuity and coherence, particularly for pedestrians at the ground level, despite different styles or periods of construction.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-2d. Prioritize streetscape improvements and promote development along Signature Streets, the Ward Loop and the Boulevard Loop.

Limited financial resources and market demand to locate retail in ground floor spaces make it infeasible to enhance every street in Center City to the same level. However, the impact of investments can be maximized by focusing improvements in targeted areas. First, the Signature Streets of Uptown where new retail development is envisioned to occur (Tryon, Trade and Brevard streets) should be the primary focus of streetscape improvements. These streets link streetcar and light rail corridors, employment centers, entertainment venues, and several key future development opportunities. Improvements should also be prioritized along a Ward Loop—a ring of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly streets connecting the four wards, the ward parks and multi-modal transit corridors (Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) and Davidson, 9th and Poplar/ Mint streets)—and the proposed Boulevard Loop—a ring of roadways providing easy internal circulation around the edge of Uptown (Stonewall, McDowell, 11th/12th and Graham streets)—to strengthen the role and identity of these important streets (see Integrated Transportation Network section in this chapter for more detail). Certain I-277 improvements must occur before the Boulevard Loop can be fully functional. The Center City Transportation Plan does not prioritize infrastructure improvements, but is responsive to Center City development.

Project prioritization should remain flexible to maximize responsiveness to available funding.

PUD-2e. Stimulate the redevelopment of surface parking, parking structures and underutilized areas. Parking lots create gaps within the urban fabric and discourage pedestrians from exploring what is on the next block or just around the corner. Surface parking should be required to provide attractive landscaping to mitigate visual impacts. Prior to redevelopment, surface parking lots should be activated with interim retail uses—such as food trucks and retail kiosks—along their edges. Special taxes and/or incentives should be explored to promote change.

PUD-2f. Activate the edges of new and existing parking structures. Parking structures often lack active uses on the ground floor and interrupt the pedestrian experience with entrances and exits where cars zoom in and out. Opportunities should be identified to retrofit current structures to consolidate vehicular entries, provide more attractive façades and add ground-floor commercial spaces. Existing requirements for the design of parking structures should be enforced. New requirements for parking structures should also be explored, including minimum ground-floor commercial space and setbacks that allow for future development along the sidewalk edge.



Parking structures should be retrofitted when possible to incorporate elements such as public art and ground-floor retail, similar to those at the 7th Street Station parking deck.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-3. Overcome the Barrier of the Loop

Although it serves an important traffic-carrying function, the freeway loop is a barrier that discourages walking and biking in Center City; causes a major disconnect between Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods; and inhibits development potential and, therefore, tax revenues.



Several key underpasses and overpasses, illustrated above, should be analyzed as part of a study focused on overcoming the barrier of the freeway loop.

PUD-3a. Conduct a study of all existing and potential crossings of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop. A comprehensive study should examine all existing and potential underpasses, overpasses and ramps and recommend ways to erase barriers along and across the loop. It should further analyze the proposed freeway cap and make recommendations for improving the overall aesthetics of the loop to provide memorable driving, biking and pedestrian experiences. The study should include input and ideas from the 2020 Vision Plan, Center City residents, and other key stakeholders.

PUD-3b. Reconfigure the interchanges of I-77 at Trade and 5th streets to reduce the footprint and impact of the freeway ramps. By reconstructing the approaches and balancing the need for convenient freeway access with the goal of creating better walkability, West End could be better connected to Uptown and the rest of Center City. The reconfiguration would also create several large development opportunity sites (see West Trade Corridor section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

PUD-3c. Utilize “commuter streets” and the freeway loop to make Center City more pedestrian-friendly and livable by reducing traffic volumes on surface streets. Although Center City’s commuter streets—streets that support high volumes of vehicles (4th, 5th, Church and College streets)—and the I-77 and I-277 freeways generate many negative impacts, they can also contribute to creating a more walkable urban core. Efforts should be continued to direct drivers to convenient parking destinations via these roadways. Encouraging motorists to the commuter streets and freeways instead of other surface streets would minimize overall vehicle volumes on Uptown’s secondary roads and in the surrounding neighborhoods. A “park once” strategy should be promoted whereby people park their cars and then walk, bicycle or take transit within the Center City core.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-3d. Link Uptown and North End to catalyze development opportunities and maximize potential tax revenues.

The Brookshire Freeway on the north side of the I-277 loop presents a range of challenges and opportunities. In addition to carving a large swath through the north side of Center City, the freeway's impacts are amplified by railroads and the limited use of 11th and 12th streets. Serving as a combination of frontage roads and freeway ramps, these one-way streets effectively triple the footprint of the Brookshire Freeway. Possible interventions could include tunneling or bridging the Brookshire Freeway; adding new and strategic development areas north of 11th Street and south of 12th Street; eliminating one or more ramps; and removing portions of the freeway (see North Tryon section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail). Such substantial changes to the transportation infrastructure would be difficult and would require careful scrutiny, but the rewards would be massive. Establishing a continuous connection between Uptown and North End would significantly boost the area's development potential and propel Center City beyond its current physical and economic boundaries.

PUD-3e. Improve overpass and underpass connections to enhance safety and comfort. A perceived lack of safety is a major barrier for people considering walking or biking across the loop. Lighting and overall visibility should be improved

at all locations, but especially at underpasses. Enhancing the streetscape environment with art, lighting and landscaping—or even small retail kiosks—would help to create a more consistent pedestrian experience and better link Uptown to the surrounding commercial and residential cores. A comprehensive and coordinated design treatment, rather than piecemeal interventions, should be developed for the loop's overpasses and underpasses. A more contiguous building edge adjacent to—even crossing the freeway at cap locations—would decrease the perceived crossing distance. New development could also help soften the visual impacts of the loop, effectively “hiding” the freeway behind well-designed buildings.

PUD-3f. Enhance Neighborhood Connections linking Center City Neighborhoods. The barrier of the I-277 loop extends beyond the immediate vicinity of the freeway infrastructure. In most cases, the negative impact of the freeway extends for blocks into Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Key connections to Uptown and between neighborhoods should be enhanced for pedestrians and bicyclists. Improvements may include landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, street furnishings and designated or shared bicycle facilities. Neighborhood connections could be further enhanced with features highlighting the unique histories of the neighborhoods they traverse.



Freeway underpasses can incorporate recreation uses, such as this skate park in Portland, Oregon, to create a sense of activity and “eyes on the street.”



Bold lighting can be used to transform underpasses into better places to walk and bike.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-4. Develop Infrastructure That Serves Multiple Purposes

Infrastructure should be designed to serve multiple, overlapping purposes whenever possible. Urban infrastructure investments—including Center City’s streets, above-ground utilities and bridges—must be well-designed, highly functional, sustainable and achieve many objectives. The infrastructure of a memorable Center City must be beautiful and compelling. This approach will help justify expenditures and ensure that public investments benefit all Charlotteans.

PUD-4a. Integrate the design of Center City’s streets, transit, public art and utilities for layered functionality that serves multiple purposes.

Streets comprise approximately 25% of a downtown environment. As such, they represent a tremendous

opportunity to increase the amount of a city’s park, recreation and open space. Design moves such as street-side plazas, generous midblock crossings, and “pocket parks” can combine to increase the utility of streets. Innovations in modern street design also make it possible to manage and treat urban stormwater using attractive bioswales, stormwater planters and rain gardens. Future street improvements in Center City should aim to achieve more than efficiently moving automobiles; they must also support and incentivize pedestrian and bicycle use, filter contaminants from urban runoff, and contribute to Charlotte’s open space and recreational amenities.

PUD-4b. Ensure that all infrastructure investments are designed and implemented to enhance the aesthetic quality of Uptown and Center City Charlotte. All Center City infrastructure should be re-examined for ways that it can contribute to the urban form. For instance, a freeway cap should do more than just fill a gap in the urban fabric; it should also serve as a dynamic eye-catching gateway feature that encourages community gathering and new private development. Transit stations should do more than provide access to light rail or streetcar; they should be iconic anchors of employment concentrations and attractive features of mixed-use neighborhoods.



The High Line in New York City is a repurposed rail line infrastructure that now serves multiple functions for the community, including mobility, recreation, gathering and urban gardening.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-5. Promote Access to Center City and Create People-Friendly, Interesting and Active Places

Center City must be safe and inviting for residents and visitors of all ages, incomes and ability levels. Infrastructure systems and amenities should provide great mobility and navigation for people using a variety of transportation modes.

PUD-5a. Create a network of great bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout Uptown that connect to the surrounding neighborhoods. While the neighborhoods provide many opportunities for children and families, Uptown has not experienced significant growth in the number of families with children. Center City Charlotte—with its parks, schools, greenway trails and arts, culture and entertainment destinations—is well positioned to remain one of the most family-friendly urban centers in the country. A robust network of great bicycle and pedestrian facilities should connect Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods, and the Irwin and Little Sugar Creek Greenways. Bicycle boulevards, shared and dedicated bike lanes, and cycletracks provide options for cyclists of nearly all ability and comfort levels. Suitable locations for neighborhood connections should be explored.

PUD-5b. Develop a variety of interactive wayfinding elements to make navigating Center City more intuitive and legible. Traditional wayfinding signage is useful when people know where they want to go and are already in the general vicinity of their destination. However, with all of the

attractions and destinations in Center City, many visitors, employees and even residents are not aware of all that the area has to offer. Interactive wayfinding systems should supplement traditional signage to help people maximize their experience in Center City. Interactive touch-screen displays could provide the ability to search, get personalized recommendations and determine the best route to get people to where they want to go. While initial capital investment costs can be significant, updating digital displays is much more cost-effective than changing traditional signage. Finally, smart phone applications and other technology should be developed to enhance wayfinding, transit use and parking within Center City.



Creating a great bicycle and pedestrian network is critical to promoting better access to Center City.



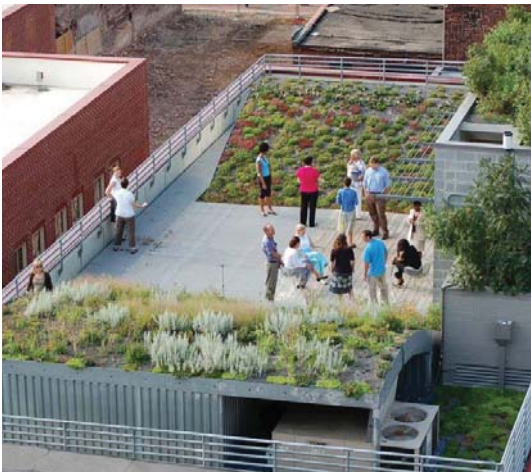
The existing signage and wayfinding system should be augmented with interactive technology and real-time information to promote access to Center City.

placemaking and urban design recommendations

PUD-6. Encourage Sustainable Design and Development

Green design and development practices can have a big impact on not only the overall environmental footprint of Center City but also its placemaking. Programs should include incentives for both public and private projects. Public projects can provide leadership by defining green standards and setting goals to adopt sustainable construction, design and maintenance practices.

PUD-6a. Public buildings should be developed to high sustainable development standards. All new development and major renovation projects for public facilities should adhere to Charlotte's Policy for Sustainable City Facilities. Designing to optimize the key priorities of preserving land and trees, conserving clean water resources,



Green roofs and other sustainable building methods can help reduce Center City's environmental impacts.

reducing energy use and carbon footprint, and maximizing transportation alternatives would help to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable development to employees and private investors. With the many County and federal facilities located in Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods, a similar policy could greatly reduce Center City's ecological impact.

PUD-6b. Continue the efforts of Envision: Charlotte to promote sustainability through public-private collaboration. Envision: Charlotte is a collaborative partnership among major employers, building owners and managers along with municipal and technology leaders. Its purpose is to create the



On-site stormwater management at surface parking lots and along streets will reduce runoff while beautifying the environment.

most environmentally sustainable urban core in the nation by connecting numerous environmental programs and initiatives. It includes digital smart grid infrastructure as well as energy data and monitoring that will help achieve a reduction of energy use in Uptown by 20% in five years.

PUD-6c. Institute policies and programs that encourage sustainable design and construction for private projects, including on-site stormwater management. Incentives should be explored for green building and site development, including green roofs, solar technology, rainwater capture, gray water reuse, bioswales and more. Tools may include design assistance, financial incentives and low interest loans.

PUD-6d. Enhance Charlotte's "City of Trees" identity by developing high-quality landscaped areas and a dense Uptown tree canopy. Center City's neighborhoods enjoy a leafy canopy, but the tree coverage within Uptown's dense development is sparse. More planted medians in Uptown can add shade to exposed streets and boulevards. Developers should contribute to applicable local improvement districts to ensure that the design of Center City's streets supports the "City of Trees." In addition, many streets trees in the surrounding Center City neighborhoods are reaching their maturity. Replacement of the existing canopy is critical to adding to the quality of life and should be an ongoing effort.

applied innovation corridor

By 2020, City Center is the hub of an “Applied Innovation Corridor” beginning in South End, extending through Uptown and “North End,” and linking onward to the UNC Charlotte (UNCC) campus. While banking and hospitality institutions continue to serve as the economic backbone, new technologies, industrial sectors and emerging markets bring greater prosperity and investment to Center City. The Applied Innovation Corridor provides the jobs, housing and support services needed to strengthen Center City’s position as the regional economic hub and incubator of the 21st century economy. The corridor has strong links with the region’s universities and colleges via partnerships and collaboration on research, technology development and job training. The entire area benefits from easy freight movement, light rail and commuter rail stations, quick connections to Uptown’s major transportation centers, and new pedestrian and bicycle linkages. In the central part of the corridor, North End redevelopment and neighborhood rehabilitation initiatives build upon the area’s unique residential character and industrial history. The result is a walkable, mixed-use “urban industrial park” with distinctive neighborhoods. This area fosters an atmosphere of creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship; provides unparalleled connectivity for moving goods and people; and creates an exciting urban living and working experience linking the North End to NoDa, Belmont and the larger Applied Innovation Corridor.

Existing Situation

Great cities require strong, resilient economies. Already the second most important center for commercial banking and finance in the United States, Charlotte also has vital industry clusters in energy production and infrastructure, biosciences, informatics (financial, security and health administration), and health care. Center City’s existing concentration of human capital is a critical asset that supports these sectors. As the region’s most vibrant urban area, Center City is uniquely positioned to further capitalize on these strengths and attract firms and individuals seeking urban amenities—such as transit, retail, nightlife, sports facilities, cultural venues and more—that are not available in many other cities. The commercial and industrial cores of Center City—from South End, through Uptown and north to the UNCC campus—have the potential to become an Applied Innovation Corridor.





The Applied Innovation Corridor stretches from South End to UNC Charlotte with major development and partnership opportunities in North End.

Currently, the majority of the region's high-technology companies, biotechnology firms and research institutions are located outside of Center City. The UNCC Research Institute and its affiliates (including the Energy Production and Infrastructure Center (EPIC), the Bioinformatics Center and the Ben Craig Center) have existing facilities and new state-of-the-art sites under development on or near the main UNCC campus. Evidence from defined "innovation zones" across the United States and internationally suggests that concentrated, strategically targeted investment in physical and social infrastructure can yield many long-term benefits. These investments focus on linking existing economic strengths to education and innovation, which in turn fosters new business formation and job creation. Smaller start-ups and individual firms exist throughout Center City today, but in general they are not grouped into areas of critical mass or identifiable industry clusters.

With existing freight infrastructure, extension of the LYNX Blue Line light rail north to UNCC, and future commuter and high speed rail service, the Applied Innovation Corridor holds untapped potential to create renewed economic momentum for Center City. In particular, the core of North End—comprised of the area from the freeway loop northward to the industrial district along Tryon Street, and from Davidson Street to Statesville Avenue—is a critical link in the corridor. Though it currently lacks a strong identity and is relatively disconnected from the Uptown core, North End is strategically located, has a mix of industrial uses, and contains large amounts of vacant or underutilized land.

Opportunities and Challenges

There are several opportunities for the Applied Innovation Corridor related to physical, social and economic development. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Leverage the well-established commercial banking and finance sectors and growing industry clusters in energy production and infrastructure, biosciences, informatics, and health care.
- Build upon the precedent for successful redevelopment and branding in South End and apply to other parts of the Applied Innovation Corridor.
- Link to research and development activities at the main UNCC campus with the planned light rail connection.
- Capitalize on the presence of academic programming and students at the new UNCC Uptown facility, which is in close proximity to existing Uptown firms.
- Use the existing arts, culture, nightlife and other quality of life amenities located in Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods to attract companies and employees.
- Benefit from the availability of underutilized industrial land and space in North End.
- Take advantage of current investor and developer interest in North End property.
- Leverage potential development to benefit city through increased tax revenues.

Center City faces several challenges to creating a strong Applied Innovation Corridor. Specific **challenges** include:

- Strong and increasingly competitive innovation economies in other areas of the metro region and North Carolina that overlap with the key industry sectors in Center City.
- Distance between Center City and the main UNCC campus.
- The physical barrier of the Brookshire Freeway between Uptown, South End and North End.
- The physical barrier of the rail yards and intermodal yard, which disconnects North End neighborhoods from each other as well as from planned light rail service, impedes development, and limits potential tax revenue generation in the area.
- Incomplete networks for pedestrian and bicyclists throughout the corridor, and a lack of sufficient east-west connections for all users, especially north of Uptown.
- A lack of coordination and leadership focused on establishing the Applied Innovation Corridor and enhancing, redeveloping and recruiting new economic activity to North End in particular.



Rail yards in North End disconnect neighborhoods from each other, impeding development and limiting potential tax revenue generation.

Recommendations

The Applied Innovation Corridor builds upon several of Center City's greatest assets, including Uptown's existing businesses and employees, South End's recent redevelopment initiatives, and the area's several higher education institutions. The following recommendations and physical strategies leverage these strengths and will help **shape, promote and catalyze economic development in the corridor, particularly in North End**. Collectively, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1
Urban
Design and
Sustainability



GOAL 2
Regional
Economic
Engine



GOAL 3
Lifelong
Learning



GOAL 4
Premier Arts,
Cultural and
Entertainment
Destination



GOAL 5
Walkable,
Full-Service
Neighborhoods



GOAL 6
Interconnected
Natural and
Recreational
Amenities



GOAL 7
Thriving
Retail and
Restaurants



GOAL 8
Multi-
Dimensional
Transportation
System





applied innovation corridor - north end physical strategies

North End is a key anchor of the Applied Innovation Corridor (see map on page 42), linking together South End and Uptown with UNC Charlotte along a future light rail connection. Mixed-use employment and commercial should be focused along major streets and at transit stations, providing neighborhood services while preserving existing residential areas (see recommendation AIC-5).



applied innovation corridor recommendations



AIC-1. Attract Start-Ups and Expanding Firms in Innovative Industries

A primary focus of the Applied Innovation Corridor should be on growing and retaining small- and medium-sized businesses in key sectors, including bioscience/health care and nutrition, clean energy production, finance, film and video, informatics, and industrial design/architecture. Appropriate spaces, access to capital and co-location opportunities with like industries are all important factors to success.

AIC-1a. Focus on start-ups, spin-outs and rapidly expanding firms. For all of these target sectors, the primary focus of the corridor should be on growing and retaining the types of small- and medium-sized companies that will generate both enhanced creativity and job growth. In particular, Center City should be poised to accommodate the needs of fast-growing young companies in Charlotte, rather than focusing on attracting mature large corporations from elsewhere. These small start-ups with growth potential are the seeds of a home-grown strategy key to innovative economies.

AIC-1b. Develop a full-scale medical school in conjunction with a teaching hospital. A gap in Charlotte's medical and health sciences infrastructure is the absence of a comprehensively developed medical school with a full complement of specialties, expert physicians, nurses, researchers, medical technicians and student residents, associated with a teaching hospital. Center City is

uniquely poised to attract such a program, which could be located in the Applied Innovation Corridor to leverage the strengths of the existing medical, health administration and medical institutions (including Carolina Health Systems, Presbyterian Hospital and Queens College). The University of North Carolina System has established a modest medical school branch campus in Charlotte, but the program should be expanded or supplemented by a larger effort that will attract research dollars and additional medical facilities to the area. An expanded or new teaching hospital should be developed in conjunction with a medical school and be located in close proximity to existing medical facilities. The site should also provide easy access for those travelling by foot, bike and transit.



Center City can leverage existing assets in finance, energy and medicine to attract new start-ups and expanding firms in these and other innovative industries.

applied innovation corridor recommendations

AIC-2. Foster the Transfer of Research from Academic Institutions to Industry



The High Tech Business Park in Sofia, Bulgaria is an example of partnership that supports technology transfer and collaboration between academic institutions and industry.

Establishment of a “Charlotte Technology Innovation Partnership” (CTIP)—either as a functional program within Center City Partners, an extension of the UNCC Research Institute, or an entirely new organization linking all area university research and development activities with Charlotte’s emerging innovation economy—will be important to the success of the Applied Innovation Corridor. According to a recent study from the Kauffman Foundation, the major barriers to success in the innovation economy include “difficulty accessing financing, excessive regulation and excessive taxation” (Source: *High Growth Firms and the Future of the American Economy*, Kauffman Foundation, 2010). This CTIP should help coordinate resources, direct investment, and ensure the implementation of key programs and policies that will help the corridor succeed.

AIC-2a. Create a vehicle for coordinating the funding and support of technology transfer and commercialization activities. Beyond supporting basic research at the university level, the CTIP should coordinate the funding and support of technological commercialization activities. This can be done, for example, through supporting the efforts of local entrepreneurs to channel federal Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer grants (the largest source of early funding for tech transfer and commercialization activities). The CTIP should also assess the barriers to small business formation and provide recommendations for short-term actions to remove those barriers.

AIC-2b. Position the CTIP to play the key role of coordinating efforts to bring together public and private sector entities to spur technology transfer and commercialization funding and implementation efforts. The group should provide the institutional framework for convening a wide circle of area business leaders, academics and researchers to share knowledge and build the types of social networks and human capital that are critical to the success of innovation economies.

AIC-2c. Coordinate public and private investment priorities and resource allocation to ensure that major players are working in harmony. Building on local public sector programs, the CTIP should link workforce training and educational programs with the practical needs of area businesses in the key industries that comprise the innovation economy. The group should also track technology commercialization at UNCC and in key private sector entities in Center City, as well as support the leveraging of funds for these efforts. It should create an industrial land supply index to ensure that investment is approached deliberately, so that the area’s long-term growth includes a healthy mix of office, industrial, retail, civic and residential land uses.

applied innovation corridor recommendations

AIC-3. Utilize Charlotte's Advanced Business Management Resources

Center City should fertilize and grow entrepreneurs and young start-up companies. The Ben Craig Center at UNCC and the Institute of Entrepreneurship at CPCC already provide important resources for business incubation. These efforts should be bolstered to continue linking entrepreneurs across multiple fields to professional and economic growth opportunities.

AIC-3a. Promote the existing efforts of the Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Ben Craig Center to potential start-ups, new businesses and companies interested in innovation and expansion. In conjunction with the Charlotte Technology Innovation Partnership (CTIP), the Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Ben Craig Center are uniquely poised to link professors and students at Center City's higher education institutions with academic researchers in engineering, sciences and other fields as they seek to develop and market new technologies and services. The Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Ben Craig Center should also continue to provide entrepreneurial research and business support through education, training, counseling services, and provision of office and production space.

AIC-3b. Maximize benefits of the Institute of Entrepreneurship and Ben Craig Center for students, faculty and the business community.

Students attending educational institutions within the Applied Innovation Corridor should be exposed to the day-to-day opportunities and challenges facing Center City businesses. Students, academicians and researchers would benefit from the entrepreneurial perspective and expertise of individuals trained to understand the world through the lens of commerce rather than pure science or theory. For example, MBA students would benefit from exposure to the day-to-day management problems of young high-technology businesses. Culinary students would be more competitive for future jobs with real-world experience in one of Center City's innovative new restaurants. Establishment of the CTIP and continuation of efforts by the Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Ben Craig Center would also serve as key drivers of new job growth and economic vitality, as technologies are brought to market and new business ventures form and expand.



The Institute of Entrepreneurship and the Ben Craig Center link professors and students with Charlotte's business leadership to foster creation of new businesses and technologies.



Johnson & Wales University already has many programs that tie together learning with real-world jobs and entrepreneurship.

applied innovation corridor recommendations

AIC-4. Improve Interregional Connectivity to Promote Research, Development and Innovation



Center City should seize upon the opportunity to develop a major high speed rail stop at the future Gateway Station.



The proximity of Charlotte Douglas International Airport should be leveraged to bolster the Applied Innovation Corridor.

The Applied Innovation Corridor will benefit from improved connectivity to greater Charlotte and to other regions, especially those promoting research, development and innovation. Developments in computing, cell phones and other communications tools have reduced the importance of the physical workplace in many fields. However, physical connections to and between places of employment are increasingly important as people collaborate across greater distances.

AIC-4a. Continue working with partners to develop high speed rail with a major stop at the Gateway Station. High speed rail has the potential to move people and goods at top speeds of 110 mph and average speeds of approximately 85 mph. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Tennessee have joined together with the business communities in each state to form a Southeast High Speed Rail Coalition to plan, develop and implement high speed rail in the Southeast. Passenger service on the line is slated to begin between Washington, D.C. and Charlotte sometime between 2018 and 2022. Center City's Gateway Station will be a major destination along the corridor. The station and adjacent land between the railroad and Graham Street should be developed with connectivity to North End and South End in mind.

AIC-4b. Improve intermodal cargo connectivity within the Applied Innovation Corridor and throughout the region. Improvements to the freeway loop and redevelopment in North End must ensure that the existing level of freight access to railroads and freeways is not compromised. In addition, transfer of parcel and freight from air to truck to rail should be improved to strengthen Charlotte's role as a regional distribution hub. Improved intermodal cargo connectivity in the North End and at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport would help support growth of the overall corridor.

AIC-4c. Expand the light rail system with an extension of the LYNX Blue Line light rail, a new commuter line and connections to the airport. The new light rail line will link Center City with UNCC and other key economic nodes. Students, researchers and entrepreneurs associated with Center City's urban campus and its affiliate tech-transfer and business incubation programs would be attracted to new employment centers near transit stations in North End. The new commuter line will provide another direct transit link between Uptown and the rest of the corridor. Stronger transit connections would also make Center City friendlier for business travelers.

applied innovation corridor recommendations

AIC-5. Create and Implement a North End Development Strategy

As a central anchor of the Applied Innovation Corridor, North End will be the focal point of a new urban mixed-use neighborhood—one with a unique combination of employment and residential development that provides the middle class jobs of the 21st century. It will be a place where people can easily walk, bike or take transit between home, work, services and entertainment. Existing industrial and residential uses will be integrated with new businesses, workforce housing and neighborhood centers that together revitalize the area. The transformation envisioned for North End will require a specific, strategic set of implementation actions—advanced by the CTIP—to ensure it becomes a reality (see Applied Innovation Corridor—North End Physical Strategies).

AIC-5a. Connect North End to Uptown and the surrounding areas to fully leverage nearby assets.

Despite its close proximity to Uptown and adjacent neighborhood centers, access to and from North End is challenging. Improvements must be made to the Brookshire Freeway and 11th and 12th streets to remove the physical barriers that divide North End from Uptown. New development should also help to bridge the gap between the two areas. East-west connectivity should be addressed by improving existing connections and exploring the opportunity for a new connection across the rail yards and intermodal yards.

AIC-5b. Leverage transit-oriented development (TOD) to foster a unique set of employment opportunities.

TOD typically promotes a mix of residential and commercial uses designed to maximize access to public transit and encourage transit ridership. A TOD is usually anchored by a major transit stop and is surrounded by relatively high-density development, compact blocks and walkable streets. The City's existing transit-oriented employment zoning district, which accommodates high-intensity office uses, office support services or residential uses in a pedestrian-oriented setting, should be applied around North End transit stations.

AIC-5c. Create a true jobs-housing balance.

North End was originally developed as a series of mills with employee housing nearby. The strong history of combining production, distribution and residential uses in one area should provide the inspiration for the area's revitalization. Neighborhoods such as Greenville, Lockwood and Optimist Park already provide the foundation. New workforce housing should be developed to offer more housing choices and provide additional residents and workers to support neighborhood centers. New development should respect and enhance existing neighborhoods' character and heritage.



Rail transit stations in North End must be leveraged to the fullest extent with mixed-use transit-oriented development, like this example in Pasadena, California.

applied innovation corridor recommendations



Neighborhood-serving uses such as an urban grocery store should be developed in North End to serve area residents.



The corridor must attract the creative and technology workers of the 21st century, who desire urban amenities and gathering spaces.

AIC - 5d Work with the railroad to optimize freight operations while increasing redevelopment potential of rail yards. The rail yards occupy a large area within the North End that could provide significant redevelopment opportunities. Efforts should be undertaken to consolidate rail operations in the North End rail yards to maintain optimal rail functions while making land available for new development projects.

AIC-5e. Ensure a variety of neighborhood amenities to support residents and employees. North End currently lacks mature and walkable neighborhood centers that are attractive to those seeking to live in Center City (see Neighborhoods of Center City section in this chapter for more detail). New amenities will be essential to successful North End revitalization. The physical environment and available amenities, such as coffee shops, cafés, bars and other social gathering spots, as well as retail shops and recreational spaces, should support workers' individual needs and encourage personal connections outside of the employment environment.

AIC-5f. Improve the bicycle and pedestrian environment. Improvements to walkability and bikeability in North End should be achieved by working with private developers to ensure good paths around and through new development. The needs of the pedestrian and the cyclist should be balanced with maintaining the ability to load and unload trucks and trains. Higher-intensity employers, such as offices and laboratories, should be located closest to transit stations. Warehouses and larger manufacturing operations should be located at least a half mile from stations.

AIC-5g. Build the innovation infrastructure necessary to attract desired employers. Public infrastructure in North End should include information technology, flexible production facilities, and access to cutting edge equipment and tools. Small groups of academics and/or private investors would require a high-tech infrastructure with low overhead. Innovation would also require shared spaces that provide the ability to scale up and down quickly.

center city urban campus

In 2020, Center City will be an Urban Campus, with the universities and colleges supplying the intellectual capital and ambiance to inspire academic excellence, leadership and innovation. The presence of a broad array of students, faculty and staff is a tremendous asset. As the foundation of a vibrant, economically viable Center City—which competes globally for the best and the brightest—the higher education institutions work together with one voice and one purpose. Young people stay in Charlotte, raise families and add to a growing, dynamic population, partially due to the numerous lifelong learning opportunities. The Urban Campus truly transforms Center City and enriches the lives of all Charlotteans.

Existing Situation

The Charlotte region boasts a well-educated workforce with one of the largest public school systems in the nation. The region is complemented by 38 higher education institutions with a total enrollment of approximately 88,000 students. Of those, seven are located in Center City Charlotte. Independently, these institutions offer a wealth of curricula (see Center City Colleges and Universities on following page).

The area's higher education institutions also contribute to the physical context of Center City. The new UNC Charlotte (UNCC) facility located within the new First Ward Park will house the school's business, architecture and design programs. Central Piedmont Community College's (CPCC) new culinary building opened in 2009 to accommodate its technology, hotel and restaurant management programs. Johnson & Wales University is creating plans for a new student center. Finally, Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) has opened a new Visual and Performing Arts facility. Center City's educational institutions provide a strong foundation for the future growth and development of Center City.





Opportunities and Challenges

There are numerous assets and opportunities upon which to shape Center City's future as an Urban Campus. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Develop programmatic and physical linkages between academic institutions and the business community.
- Capitalize on the recent trend of expansion by major institutions.
- Leverage the location of several educational facilities that are situated along current and planned transit corridors.
- Capitalize on the range and diversity of program offerings at the various institutions.

- Take advantage of the presence of students and facilities in Center City.

Center City faces several challenges to achieving the desired vision. Specific **challenges** include:

- A lack of physical adjacency between institutions.
- Inadequate transportation options between institutions.
- A lack of student-oriented venues.
- Relatively low number of high school students who choose to continue on with higher education in Charlotte.
- Growing need to ensure that the Center City workforce is well-educated and can help Charlotte compete with other metro areas.

CENTER CITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

School	Student Enrollment	Key Academic Focus
Central Piedmont Community College	19,300	Workforce Development; Engineering, Energy and Computer Science
Charlotte School of Law	500	Law
Johnson & Wales University	2,500	Culinary Arts, Hospitality and Business
Johnson C. Smith University	1,500	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, and Service Learning
King's College	650	Business, Design and Technology, and Health Care
Queens University Charlotte Center	2,100	Communications, Journalism, Health Care and Nursing
UNC Charlotte (Uptown)	1,000	Business Administration, Urban Design, Health Administration and Accountancy
Wake Forest University Charlotte Center	180	Business, Executive Education and Continuing Education
TOTAL	27,730	



Central Piedmont Community College has nearly 20,000 students enrolled in a variety of disciplines.



Johnson C. Smith University anchors the Five Points neighborhood center and historic West End.

Recommendations

Central Charlotte is an “urban laboratory” setting like no other in the region. It is **a place where academics, creativity, entrepreneurship, collaboration and innovation can permeate** throughout the economic, physical and social environments. The following recommendations and physical strategies outline steps that should be taken by both the public and private sectors to transform Center City into a true Urban Campus. Together, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1
Urban
Design and
Sustainability



GOAL 2
Regional
Economic
Engine



GOAL 3
Lifelong
Learning



GOAL 4
Premier Arts,
Cultural and
Entertainment
Destination



GOAL 5
Walkable,
Full-Service
Neighborhoods



GOAL 6
Interconnected
Natural and
Recreational
Amenities

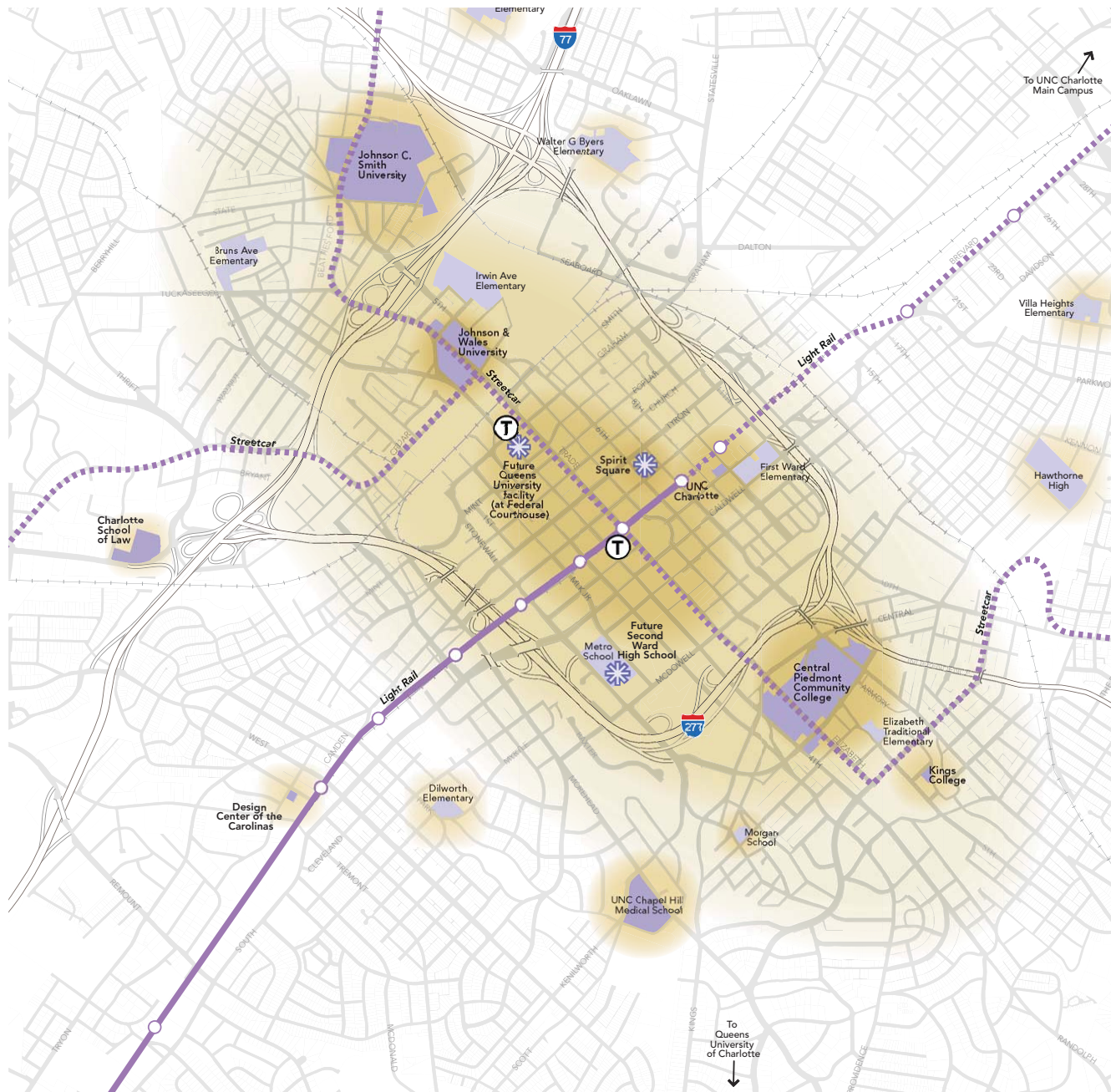


GOAL 7
Thriving
Retail and
Restaurants



GOAL 8
Multi-
Dimensional
Transportation
System

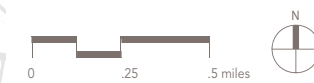




center city urban campus physical strategies

To cultivate a true urban campus, educational institutions should be linked by direct, efficient transit connections as well as bikeable and walkable streets. Complementary uses and partner programs should be concentrated around campuses and throughout the core of Center City.

- High School/K-12
- College/University
- Primary Areas of High Concentration
- Secondary Areas of Concentration
- Future Educational Institution
- Existing Transit Connection
- Proposed Transit Connection
- Transit Hub
- Light Rail Station
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail



center city urban campus recommendations



UC-1. Establish Shared Programs and Partnerships

The most vibrant city centers and metropolitan areas enjoy strong collaborations between pre K-12 schools, post-secondary schools and industry. The number and types of partnerships are nearly limitless. While a number of strategic partnerships exist today, there are several additional opportunities that directly build upon existing assets.

UC-1a. Create a Center City Education Consortium comprised of the seven institutions of higher education. The Consortium would foster collaboration, partnering and idea sharing among the faculty and staff of the institutions. It would also promote collaboration and interaction among the various campus student organizations. The Consortium could include other potential partners such as secondary schools and public agencies. Classes, curricula and cooperatives should be developed and shared among the member institutions. In addition, joint marketing and branding efforts—at the local, regional and national levels—could be developed to highlight the collective power of these schools and promote Center City as a dynamic place of lifelong learning.

UC-1b. Connect the Consortium to the business community through the establishment of a Center City Business Cooperative. The Cooperative should facilitate internship and assistantship programs that place students into workplace settings. It should help with job placement for recent graduates, so that students remain in Center City as they embark upon their careers. The Cooperative could also link academic programs with facility space in private businesses to leverage resources and foster programmatic partnerships.



Physical connections should be strengthened between ImaginOn and other existing and future Center City institutions.

center city urban campus recommendations

UC-2. Strengthen the Physical Relationship between Institutions



Transit infrastructure should be integrated into campus facilities, like this example from Portland, Oregon.



Shared facilities between institutions, such as this student union in Belfast, Northern Ireland, should be explored.

In a truly integrated Urban Campus, the number of adjacencies, the physical connections between assets and the potential for collaboration multiply exponentially. Therefore, the geographic location of learning institutions and physical links between them become critical components of the educational experience. In the most successful city centers, schools are clustered in a fashion that allows for strategic collaboration with other institutions and members of business and industry.

UC-2a. Develop shared facilities that provide places for interaction and leveraging of resources. The nexus of Center City student life could include shared student organizations, event and meeting spaces, restaurants, bookstore, information center, and other student services. The Spirit Square redevelopment site between Tryon, College, 6th and 7th streets in First Ward provides an ideal location for a facility such as a shared student union. Other common facilities could include student housing, library space, classrooms and laboratories, and recreation facilities at various locations. Shared facilities should be a targeted use in new mixed-use development to help offset the high cost of land in Uptown.

UC-2b. Link institutions of higher education with a range of mobility options. All existing and future campus facilities should be connected by multiple modes of transportation. Institutions should locate as close as possible to transit stations, including light rail and streetcar, and work with the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) to develop discounted or free pass programs for students, faculty and staff. Transit should provide frequent service, easy transfers and scheduling that aligns with campus needs. Bike and car share programs should be jointly developed by the institutions, fostered by the Center City Education Consortium. Center City's streets and greenways should provide safe, easy and efficient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists between institutions, as well as links to transit stations.

UC-2c. Develop a mix of housing options that can serve students attending higher education institutions in Center City. New student housing should be developed near one or more educational institutions and along existing and planned transit routes. Shared student housing facilities would help to encourage interaction between students and can help the schools provide better housing options collectively than they may be able to individually. Student housing in Center City would add to the growing population in the urban core and help support additional retail, restaurants and services.

center city urban campus recommendations

UC-3. Establish New Educational Opportunities

While Center City enjoys a large number of educational assets, there are opportunities to bolster economic development and educational offerings in Charlotte with several targeted additions. New schools should complement current programs, build upon existing assets and support growing industry clusters.

UC-3a. Identify and attract an art and design school to Center City. The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Center City Partners, and the Arts and Science Council should partner to recruit an existing art and design school pursuing expansion opportunities. Stakeholders should market the many amenities Center City has to offer, including existing arts and design assets, the built and natural environments, and planned connectivity. The school should be located near existing arts facilities and/or design businesses, if possible.

UC-3b. Explore future opportunities for a new public high school in Uptown. As outlined in the Second Ward Neighborhood Master Plan, a new high school should capitalize on proximity to the Uptown business district and adjacency to the Metro School. A new high school could be a magnet school, with specialized courses and curricula that would attract students from around Center City and emphasize topics such as business and finance, arts, design, energy, and sustainability. The high school could also offer dual/concurrent enrollment through which students could simultaneously obtain credits at Center City's colleges and universities.

UC-3c. Continue to develop and promote the growth of the UNC Chapel Hill medical school in Charlotte. As the largest U.S. city without a medical school, Charlotte should attract a full medical school program to Center City. Programs in health and wellness at existing Charlotte institutions will also benefit from the students, faculty and facilities associated with a major medical school (see Applied Innovation Corridor section in this chapter for more detail).



An art and design school that may be considering expansion opportunities, such as the Rhode Island School of Design, should be a major priority to attract to Center City.

center city urban campus recommendations

UC-4. Create Opportunities for Lifelong Learning

Existing residents value the many formal and informal educational opportunities in Center City available to non-traditional students. Support for and enhancement of lifelong learning can help attract new residents and employers to the area.

UC-4a. Develop Spirit Square as a facility that offers learning opportunities for all Charlotteans with a variety of learning-oriented facilities and programs.

In addition to housing a shared student union, Spirit Square could be a mixed-use, multi-institutional development that incorporates a redeveloped Main Library and Performing Arts Center. Spirit Square should contain a collection of learning-oriented facilities that attract people of all ages. Programming should take advantage of the unique collection of people and resources to create

new opportunities for teaching, learning and sharing in intellectual endeavors.

UC-4b. Develop and support adult education facilities and programs in Center City.

Secondary and post-secondary schools should contribute to offerings in Center City that include Adult Basic Education, Professional Technical Education and continuing education opportunities. The most successful adult education programs bring educational opportunities to potential students. The strong adult and continuing education programs offered by CPCC, UNCC, Johnson & Wales, Queens University, JCSU, Wake Forest University, and Northeastern University should be expanded into the Center City neighborhoods to further facilitate lifelong learning and workforce development.



Spirit Square, centrally located in Uptown, is an ideal location for new multi-institutional development that would support the Urban Campus strategy.



Adult education opportunities—including full programs, classes, lecture series and more—will boost Center City as a place of lifelong learning.

destination charlotte

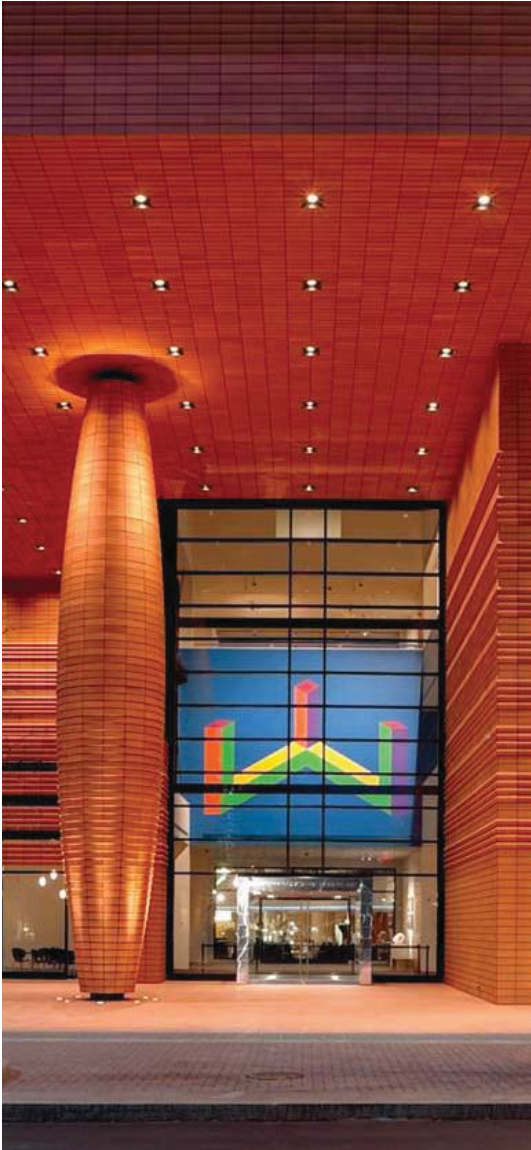
In 2020, Center City is a premier destination for arts, culture, sports and entertainment. The city's core offers countless reasons to come to Charlotte to work, socialize, recreate, linger and soak up the urban ambiance. Center City exudes a warm, gracious hospitality to both visitors and locals, who choose from a seemingly endless combination of events, sightseeing, dining, shopping and lodging. All of Center City benefits—economically, socially and culturally—from a well-connected network of public and private arts, culture, sports and entertainment destinations. From art museums, sports venues and conference facilities to lively nightlife, music festivals and seasonal events, Charlotte offers a special visitor experience for all.

Existing Situation

Today Center City is a major regional destination that attracts residents, businesses and visitors from around the country and world. People are drawn to its many arts and cultural offerings, sporting events, history, shopping, dining, entertainment, and nightlife. Taking in a Broadway show, eating at the hip new place, cheering for the team, strolling along Tryon Street—every day there is a new experience to be had in Center City.

Major arts and cultural destinations include the Levine Center for the Arts, North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, McColl Center for Visual Art and North Carolina Dance Theatre. Discovery Place Museum and ImaginOn offer art, theater and science education for children and families, while the Levine Museum of the New South provides new perspectives into the area's historic past. A proposed City Market, located at the LYNX Blue Line 7th Street Station, will provide fresh food to residents, employees and visitors—and will become a “must see” when visiting Charlotte.





The Arts and Sciences Council has played a major role in helping public art to flourish in Center City, supporting many programs, organizations, venues and individual artists. Public art adorns busy street corners and plazas as well as transportation stops and green spaces, creating an urban environment that is distinctly Charlotte.

Complementing the abundance of arts, cultural and entertainment options, Center City is home to many of the region's one-of-a-kind sports facilities and programs. More than a million spectators come to Uptown annually to watch the NFL's Carolina Panthers, NBA's Charlotte Bobcats and Charlotte Checkers minor league hockey team. Collegiate events, such as the CIAA basketball tournament, ACC football championship and Belk football Bowl attract spectators from around the country. Amateur sports are also well represented, both in Center City and elsewhere in the region. Mecklenburg County is home to the U.S. National Whitewater Center, a unique facility that boasts the largest man-made whitewater course in the world. This facility is complemented by a multitude of outdoor and indoor activities that take place in Center City. Uptown has the Aquatic Center, the site of the USA Ultra Swim and seniors swim program, as well as multiple road cycling and running races. These events not only bring visitors to the facilities but also provide direct economic benefits to Center City through increased spending at hotels, restaurants, shops and other venues.

Opportunities and Challenges

While there are many building blocks already in place, Center City can be further improved and enhanced to become an even greater "Destination Charlotte" in the coming years. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Leverage the abundance and variety of arts, cultural, entertainment and sports facilities and programs.
- Build upon the newly expanded Charlotte Convention Center to increase the number of conferences and hotel stays in Center City.
- Increase the visibility of the area's professional sports teams, including the Panthers and Bobcats, so that they become attractions on a national scale.
- Promote and market the one-of-a-kind NASCAR Hall of Fame.
- Highlight Center City's rich history and cultural past.
- Embrace and enhance Center City's neighborhoods, complete with distinct architectural features, gathering places and programming, so that they become draws unto themselves.
- Increase the presence of public art, adding to the identity of Center City.
- Continue to employ and enhance the recently created "Charlotte's Got A Lot" branding and marketing campaign.
- Connect and support established organizations, such as the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority and the Charlotte Regional Sports Commission, whose missions are to promote and program the Center City and the region.

Despite these assets and opportunities, there are several challenges that must be overcome if Center City is to achieve its potential as a significant and noteworthy destination. Specific **challenges** include:

- Lack of comfortable pedestrian and transit connections between Center City's major facilities and venues.
- Lack of street-level retail to complement the visitor experience.
- A Visitors Center that is currently neither large nor comprehensive enough to support increased visitor travel to Charlotte.
- Insufficient or unidentified funding mechanisms for development of new arts, cultural, and entertainment venues and programs.
- Lack of "internationally friendly" events and resources that celebrate and attract Charlotte's significant population of residents from other countries.
- Lack of an iconic structure, skyline feature or landmark design to help create brand recognition.
- Weak or nonexistent neighborhood events and programming in some neighborhoods, while strong in others.
- Lack of a nationally- and internationally-recognized identity for Center City as a destination.

Recommendations

An array of destinations and activities helps to fuel a strong tourism industry for Uptown and Center City. The many exciting programs, events and venues also make the area **more livable for Center City residents and draw people from around the metro region**. The following recommendations and physical strategies will ensure the area's continued vitality and prosperity. Collectively, they support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability



GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine



GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning



GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities



GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants

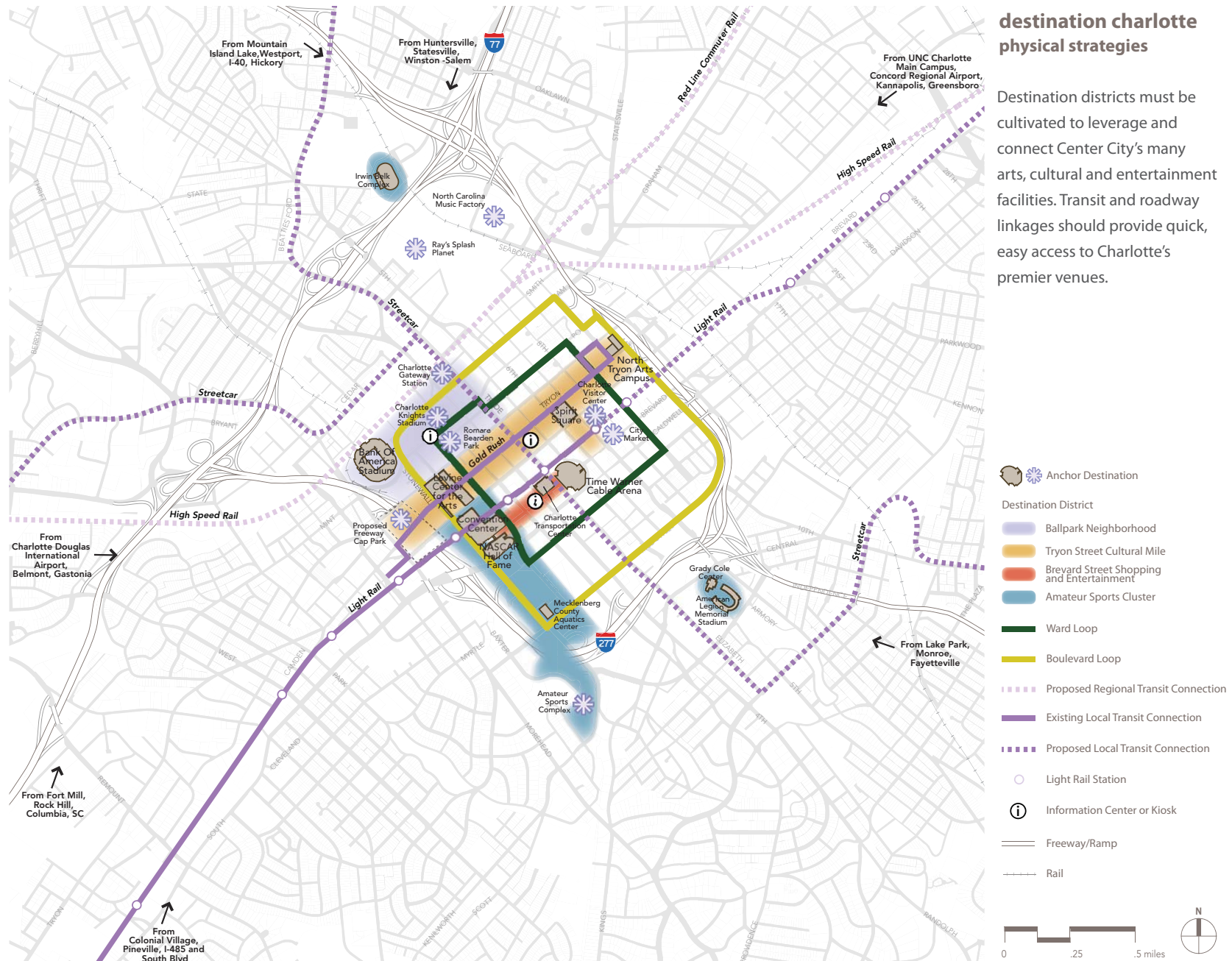


GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System



destination charlotte physical strategies

Destination districts must be cultivated to leverage and connect Center City's many arts, cultural and entertainment facilities. Transit and roadway linkages should provide quick, easy access to Charlotte's premier venues.



destination charlotte recommendations



DC-1. Link Existing and New Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Venues

Center City is already a major regional destination for arts, culture, sports and entertainment. However, much of this success has been driven by the attraction of individual venues, not the links and relationships between them. Center City will benefit from strategically connecting facilities via a well-designed public realm with interesting ground-floor retail, direct transit links, and innovative approaches to marketing and promotion. A combination of signage, architecture, streetscape design, placemaking and marketing materials can provide a cohesive and recognizable experience.

DC-1a. Jump start development along Brevard Street to connect major destinations.

Brevard Street provides a critical connection between the Charlotte Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and Time Warner Cable Arena. The corridor is planned as a pedestrian-friendly “Signature Street” with active ground floors, wide sidewalks with attractive landscaping and a mix of other supporting uses. Mid- to high-density mixed-use development is recommended, including a new Charlotte Transportation Center anchoring a landmark skyscraper. Easily accessible by light rail, streetcar, bus and bike—and with a flexible, intimately-scaled design that would allow the roadway to be closed off to autos during festivals and events—Brevard would be active, interesting and exciting.

DC-1b. Create exciting streetscape environments around the proposed minor league ballpark. The proposed minor league ballpark between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and 4th, Graham and Mint streets would add another great sports venue to Center City. The area’s streets must be pedestrian-friendly and provide strong links to Bank of America Stadium, the future Gateway Station and other destinations in Third Ward. The combination of the baseball and football stadiums and Romare Bearden Park would draw visitors of all ages and walks of life to this revitalized area of Uptown. Mint and Graham, in particular, should be animated with outdoor dining, places for people to recreate and relax, food kiosks and retail vendors, and a range of programmed activities (see Ballpark Neighborhood section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).



Link the NASCAR Hall of Fame and other existing arts, cultural and entertainment facilities with new venues.

destination charlotte recommendations

DC-1c. Connect the destination venues along MLK with targeted upgrades to sidewalks and streets. MLK is uniquely located, connecting the future ballpark, Bank of America Stadium, Romare Bearden Park, Levine Center for the Arts, Charlotte Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center. The streetscape environment along MLK should be enhanced to provide better pedestrian connections and amenities along this important destination corridor. Improvements should include wider sidewalks and distinct paving materials, trees, landscaping, signage, and furnishings that together distinguish this important link and build upon the recommended Ward Loop improvements (see Integrated Transportation Network section in this chapter for more detail).



Romare Bearden Park will be an important open space in Third Ward that should be connected to other destinations via streetscape enhancements.

DC-1d. Strengthen a pedestrian and transit connection linking the North Carolina Music Factory to the rest of Uptown. The North Carolina Music Factory provides Center City residents and visitors with an assortment of entertainment and dining venues combined with office, rehearsal and future residential units. As a true mixed-use environment, the facility offers a unique experience in the region but suffers from a lack of clear and safe pedestrian and bicycle access from the core of Uptown. A potential bicycle and pedestrian connection includes Tryon/9th streets to Pinewood Cemetery to Seaboard Street and should be further explored for feasibility. A second connection should be created from the future Gateway Station north along the planned commuter line to 9th, akin to the redevelopment of the High Line in New York. Elements such as designated pathways, lighting, art, sculpture and interpretive signage that reflect Charlotte's social and cultural heritage could be included along the route. Overall access to the area could also be improved through strengthening transit links, such as an extension of the Gold Rush trolley service.

DC-1e. Enhance, brand and market the diverse arts, cultural and entertainment facilities and programs located in Center City. Tryon Street is already stitched together with a great pedestrian-friendly streetscape and the Gold Rush rubber tire trolley. A number of plazas, hotels and restaurants

line the street and help to connect the various museums, concert halls and performance spaces. A branding and marketing initiative should be conducted to further strengthen and tie together this area of Tryon with the rest of Center City. Smaller venues, such as studios, galleries and experimental theaters as well as shopping, could further solidify Center City as the core of arts and culture in the larger region.

DC-1f. Maximize the opportunity to attract conventions and events with an expanded Charlotte Convention Center and redesigned College Street frontage. The Charlotte Convention Center could increase its appeal and competitive advantage by hosting events and conferences that cater to previously untapped audiences. Development of a linked conference hotel facility should be a high priority. Expanding Center City lodging options to include a wider variety of price points and family-friendly hotels would also help the Convention Center serve a wider base of customers. Given current and future market demand, the facility would be well-served by an approximately 1,000-room hotel. In addition, redesign of the Convention Center's College Street frontage to include retail uses and other consumer-oriented services would provide convenience for convention attendees and help address the inactive spaces along the facility's long blank walls.

destination charlotte recommendations

DC-2. Develop an “Amateur Sports Cluster”

Center City can draw regional and national visitors with a group of facilities oriented toward amateur sports competitions. With several existing anchors—including the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center, Grady Cole Center, Pearl Street Park and Memorial Stadium—and great regional freeway and rail connectivity, an Amateur Sports Cluster can significantly bolster economic development and regional tourism. A cluster, generally situated along Stonewall Street, can leverage proximity to the NASCAR Hall of Fame, Charlotte Convention Center, numerous hotels and other destination venues. Recreation options could also be provided for a future Second Ward High School, residents of the planned Brooklyn Village mixed-use redevelopment project and the larger Charlotte community. A feasibility study should assess the economic development potential of new amateur sports facilities in this area.

DC-2a. Secure additional funding for organizations to develop, manage and promote an Amateur Sports Cluster. An Amateur Sports Cluster could thrive with dedicated leadership and organizational entities to guide and oversee feasibility studies, development, management and promotion. Current entities such as the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, Charlotte Sports Commission and Mecklenburg County could promote Center City as a destination with sports facilities, hotels and supporting destinations. Identifying and securing additional funding for these organizations will be critical.

DC-2b. Expand the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Facility in its current location and explore co-location opportunities with a future new Second Ward High School. Renovation or new construction should result in a natatorium capable of hosting national and international swimming events, similar to the Georgia Tech Aquatics Center identified by a working group member. Improvements should include improved seating and additional shared parking opportunities. Plans should also explore sharing facilities with the future Second Ward High School and ensure adequate programming capacity for community use. A significant amount of time, energy, thought and money has been invested in studying how to best expand the existing aquatics center to draw major age group, U.S. Masters, collegiate and professional swimming events to Charlotte.

DC-2c. Develop additional indoor and outdoor sports venues. An Amateur Sports Cluster should be bolstered with a collection of new facilities within Center City, including outdoor basketball facilities, multi-use turf fields and indoor training facilities. Opportunities to develop facilities in Pearl Street Park and Baxter Street Park should be explored. These parks benefit from close proximity to the Aquatic Center and from greenway trail connections to the Grady Cole Center, Memorial Stadium, and a variety of hotels and other destinations. Also consider locating amateur sports facilities near Bank of America Stadium.



A variety of sports and activities should comprise the Amateur Sports Cluster to attract teams and visitors from throughout the region, state and country.

destination charlotte recommendations

DC-3. Further Establish Charlotte as a Premier Destination

To reinforce the identity of Center City's established destination clusters, additional venues and events should be developed to fill missing programming gaps. These facilities and activities should supplement Center City's current offerings and, as a result, attract new visitors to Center City.

DC-3a. Develop an iconic, uniquely Charlotte structure or landmark to attract visitors to Center City and increase brand recognition nationally and internationally. The great cities of the world have an easily recognizable structure—a building, bridge, gateway or other prominent architectural



Bilbao, Spain, has attracted global attention and visitation as a result of its iconic Guggenheim Museum.

feature—that is synonymous with that place. Center City could position itself as a destination nationally and internationally with the development of such a structure. The structure or landmark could be explored on the proposed cap. An international design competition should be conducted to identify its type, size and location.

DC-3b. Locate new venues adjacent to existing and proposed facilities to capitalize on synergies. The proposed minor league ballpark in Third Ward, combined with its close proximity to Bank of America Stadium, should encourage and incentivize



Signature events, such as this solar car rally in Geneva, Switzerland, should be explored to highlight Charlotte as a destination and leader in sustainability.

the development of bars and restaurants to provide services and amenities for up to 10,000 new fans attending minor league baseball and events. The City Market, currently under construction, should be accessible and convenient for all of Center City and the Charlotte area.

DC-3c. Explore the development of an electric car race and other special events in Center City. "Signature" events should be developed and hosted in appropriate locations in Center City. These events should be unique to Charlotte and put Center City "on the map." Such events could link to Charlotte's history and heritage while remaining current and integrating new trends and developments. Potential events might include an electric car NASCAR event, international food festival, music festival, military reenactments and more.

destination charlotte recommendations

DC-4. Create New, Centrally-Located Information Facilities

For those new to town or visiting for the first time in years, a visit to the tourist information office is helpful for finding out basic information on top destinations. Center City's Visitors Center should be a destination itself with educational displays and interactive programming.

DC-4a. Develop a new, expanded Visitors Center.

A new Visitors Center could provide an improved portal for tourists with additional information on the history and heritage of Center City and the larger Charlotte-Mecklenburg region. Interpretive elements, exhibits and programming could significantly enhance the visitor experience. The new Visitors Center should be located along transit near a cluster of Center City's most visited destinations. A potential site is near the 7th Street LYNX Blue Line light rail station, adjacent to the future developments of First Ward Park and the City Market and near the Levine Museum of the New South, ImaginOn, Discovery Place and the Time Warner Cable Arena.

DC-4b. Apply cutting-edge technology to existing information kiosks and other high-traffic areas. New, cutting-edge technology should be integrated with the already well-designed streetside kiosks along Tryon Street and at prominent locations such as Independence Square. These kiosks could provide information for visitors exploring Center City and its historic destination neighborhoods. They should provide on-demand information for events, transit options, nearby restaurants, shopping districts and more. A digital destination directory and other wayfinding tools should be explored as part of the kiosk design. The kiosk system should also be expanded to other major thoroughfares throughout Uptown and the Center City neighborhoods, especially in close proximity to destination venues and event sites.

DC-4c. Create an Uptown ticket booth to simplify the process of purchasing performance or event tickets. The opportunity to help attract and serve visitors with a centrally-located Uptown ticket booth should be explored. As suggested by a working group member, the booth would serve as a one-stop-shop for tickets to theater performances, concerts, special museum exhibits, ballgames and more. Tickets could be provided the day of events to help boost attendance and provide an affordable option for potential patrons.



An exciting, centrally-located Uptown ticket booth similar to Times Square's in New York City should be created to serve as a one-stop-shop to purchase tickets to events and performances.

destination charlotte recommendations

DC-5. Enhance the Center City's Identity with Programs and Venues That Celebrate Multi-Cultural Charlotte

Charlotte's solid economic foundation, reputation for livability and strong downtown are attractive to employees, students and visitors from around the world. Center City should promote an international orientation that embraces a diverse population, welcomes overseas tourists, and provides the necessary support services for these groups.

DC-5a. Develop a diverse slate of programs and events that promote a multi-cultural Charlotte.

International festivals are one way to communicate Center City's diversity to residents and visitors. The combination of food, art, music, dance and traditions

of both local Charlotteans and people from around the world—from Oktoberfest events and Cinco de Mayo parties to food festivals and more—should be embraced, celebrated and promoted.

DC-5b. Enhance efforts to further develop Center City's music and entertainment scene.

Center City is already a nightlife destination for many residents and visitors, but opportunities exist to further diversify the current offerings. Center City should provide comfortable, intimate venues for people of all ages and income levels, offering activities such as live music, dancing, karaoke, children's plays, live theater and comedy. Existing music and entertainment offerings should also be enhanced by programs that support outdoor music festivals, band and singing competitions, and weekly concert series featuring local, national and international artists.

DC-5c. Establish a diversity of new dining, music and hospitality establishments in Center City and greater Charlotte.

Center City has an opportunity to build upon the strong nucleus of quality restaurants and become a true culinary destination. The Johnson & Wales University and Central Piedmont Community College culinary and hospitality programs have been a tremendous boost to the quantity and quality of dining options in recent years. There is also an opportunity to expand upon existing music offerings in Uptown. Recognizing the value of great in-town dining and music options, residents and visitors should continue to support new concepts and creative approaches that reflect the diverse nature of Center City. Specifically, efforts should be made to cultivate and recruit ethnically diverse food establishments to Center City. Doing so would raise the awareness of the multi-cultural Charlotte population and make Center City more internationally friendly. In addition, building from the success of the North Carolina Music Factory, the music scene should be further cultivated to provide more options for residents and visitors—especially along Brevard Street—to catalyze other development and capitalize on attendees at the Convention Center.



Food festivals, restaurants and streetside vendors should all celebrate and enhance a multi-cultural Charlotte.

neighborhoods of center city

Envision a socially and culturally inclusive Center City that is a seamless tapestry of complete neighborhoods inside and outside the loop. These affordable, diverse, full-service neighborhoods—where Charlotteans have a choice of living in homes of all different sizes, types and price points—contain local retail shops, commercial services, parks and open spaces, community centers, and places of worship within easy walking distance of homes. Development in the commercial centers and corridors respects the scale, design and intimacy of nearby residential areas, transitioning appropriately from higher- to lower-intensity. Center City's neighborhoods reflect the warmth and graciousness of the genteel city that is Charlotte.

Existing Situation

Center City is a desirable place to live with a wide range of amenities, including relatively low transportation and parking costs; proximity to arts, cultural and entertainment facilities; and diverse dining and nightlife. The neighborhoods surrounding Uptown provide a variety of services and residential options and as a result have remained strong over the years. New housing types and reinvestment have attracted substantial residential growth to Uptown and South End in particular, with more than 10,000 units developed in these areas between 2000 and 2010.

Center City neighborhoods benefit from active resident participation and a long history of planning. At a broad scale, the City adopted the Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework to guide the integrated development of land and transportation infrastructure in Charlotte. Generally, the plan identifies employment opportunities and allocates higher-density housing along activity centers and growth corridors, while maintaining the lower-density residential character of the “wedges.” At the local scale, there are more than a dozen specific area plans for Center City's





neighborhoods, wards, corridors and centers. These plans have helped to guide development and growth over the decades.

The process of development and redevelopment over time has resulted in a varied urban environment, with a range of densities, architectural styles and land use patterns. The I-77/ I-277 loop has helped to keep vehicle congestion off of neighborhood streets. The presence of the loop, combined with zoning regulations and market land values, has also helped to contain high rise buildings within Uptown, preserving the character of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, the freeway acts as a real and perceived barrier between the four wards and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Recent residential growth in Center City, and particularly Uptown and South End, has typically been comprised of market rate housing and higher-end units; however, development of lower-income housing has also remained an important part of Center City's growth over the past several years. The Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) provides a variety of home ownership opportunities. CHA is an active participant in the Hope VI grant program, providing funding for a range of affordable housing projects such as First Ward Place in Uptown and Strawn Tower in South End. CHA's existing and planned Center City housing projects include mixed-income and assisted (low-income) housing developments. New projects such as the Seigle Point Apartments in Belmont, a redevelopment of the former Piedmont Courts, provide medium-density, mixed-income housing that is integrated within the neighborhood fabric and within walking distance of nearby amenities and Uptown.

Opportunities and Challenges

The neighborhoods and wards of Center City are major assets that provide a high quality of life, opportunities for cultural exchange, and a variety of housing options for all age groups, income levels and backgrounds. These neighborhoods can be further enhanced to achieve the overall vision for Center City in the coming years. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Highlight and bolster the individually distinct neighborhoods of Center City.
- Increase the diversity of housing types, design and character, including housing at a variety of price points.
- Support appropriate urban infill development to revitalize neighborhoods, increase housing density, and activate underutilized areas of Center City.
- Seize upon recent national trends in urban living to increase the number of amenities and attract more residents to Center City.

Specific **challenges** that must be addressed in order to achieve the desired vision include:

- Poor connectivity between neighborhoods, neighborhood centers, and key Uptown facilities and destinations.
- Presence of the physical and psychological barrier of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop.
- Uneven distribution of services among and within neighborhoods, such as retail stores, food markets, and recreation spaces to promote health and wellness.
- Lower accessibility for families and people with lower income levels to live in Center City due to high costs and rents, limited housing choices, and less affordable daily goods, especially in Uptown.
- A growing number of homeless individuals in Center City and the larger region.
- Inappropriate transitions between high-density development and established Center City neighborhoods.

Recommendations

Center City's diverse wards and neighborhoods are essential to its future vitality. The following recommendations and physical strategies will help ensure **appropriate development and growth while maintaining the unique qualities that residents hold dear**. Together, the recommendations support these 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability



GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine



GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning



GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities

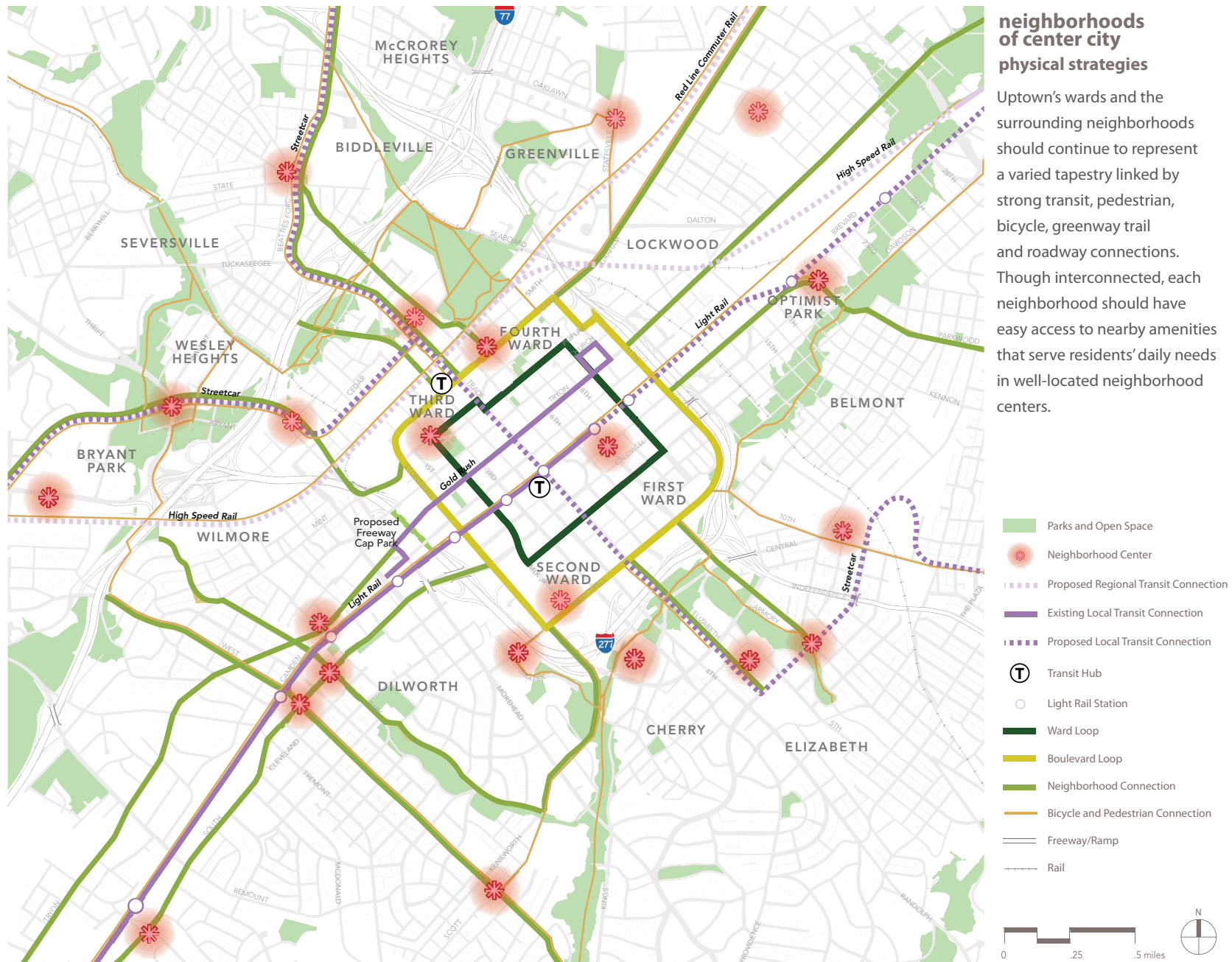


GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants



GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System





neighborhoods of center city recommendations



NCC-1. Preserve and Enhance Center City Neighborhoods

Family-friendly places and overall livability of Center City's neighborhoods help to attract and retain residents and employers. The adoption of strategies to prevent incompatible uses from infiltrating existing residential neighborhoods should be coupled with a complementary set of tools to help ensure that Center City has choices for everyone, including low- to middle-income families and individuals.

NCC-1a. Finalize and introduce a Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District (NCOD).

The NCOD is a zoning overlay intended to preserve neighborhood character and assets. Through additional regulations of street design, greenway trails, rights-of-way, site layout and built form, the NCOD (currently in development) will augment existing regulatory mechanisms to reduce conflicts between new construction and existing development while encouraging compatible infill development.

NCC-1b. Provide a mix of housing options to residents of Center City. Recommended tools include community land trusts, which are nonprofit corporations that acquire and manage land to preserve affordability for any housing located upon the land; an affordable housing protection overlay, which would require developers to replace affordable housing in comparable locations, preferably within the same neighborhood; down payment assistance and low interest financing,

including grants for down payments and low interest mortgages; and inclusionary zoning, which would require that a share of new construction be affordable to people with low to moderate incomes. Potential locations for new workforce and affordable housing development in Center City include:

- Redevelopment/upgrades of multi-family housing in West End between the proposed Five Points streetcar station and Gateway Station at Trade and Graham streets.
- New affordable, medium- and high-density housing units on the currently state-owned land along railroad tracks in Fourth Ward.
- Medium- and high-density housing that could support new neighborhood center commercial development in Optimist Park, Lockwood and Greenville neighborhoods.

NCC-1c. Continue to provide homeless support and services to ensure inclusivity and social equity. Current efforts by Mecklenburg County, local religious institutions and other support organizations should continue to utilize existing policies and programs and receive financial resources. CHA's policy to redevelop existing Center City properties via public/private partnerships should also be reinforced. A successful local example includes the Strawn Apartments Redevelopment in South End.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations

NCC-2. Establish New Neighborhood Centers and Strengthen Existing Centers



Several Center City neighborhoods already have a mature center that provides local services and shopping opportunities.



Neighborhood centers can include an array of amenities, from groceries and community centers to churches and boutique shops.

Neighborhood centers include small- to medium-sized concentrations of commercial and/or civic uses that provide goods, services and activities to meet the needs of nearby residents. Centers also play an important social role within communities by providing places to relax and gather. Many centers are anchored by civic, religious and other community uses. In some cases, a single restaurant, store, school or community facility serves as the neighborhood center. Places such as Kenilworth/Scott, East Boulevard in Dilworth, and the intersection of Central Avenue and The Plaza in Plaza Midwood are examples of streets and intersections that act as neighborhood centers.

NCC-2a. Strengthen mature neighborhood centers through targeted reinvestment, prioritized pedestrian and bicycle facility upgrades, and improved connections to multi-modal transit corridors. Shops, restaurants and other neighborhood amenities are top reasons current residents cite for choosing to locate in Center City. As neighborhood centers grow, these places could take on unique identities with respect to their scale, character, services, events and celebrations. Bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities would make them more accessible. Mature neighborhood centers, such as the intersections of East/Scott/Kenilworth, Pecan/Caswell/7th and Thomas/Central/Plaza, could benefit from targeted development and coordinated planning efforts to maintain their economic vitality and sense of place.

NCC-2b. Ensure that emerging neighborhood centers develop to provide walkable amenities and convenient transit connections for residents.

Future construction of residential development around transit stations—and as part of master plans such as Second Ward Village—would spur the growth of new neighborhood centers. Creating a high-quality pedestrian experience, providing a diverse mix of services, extending Gold Rush service to more neighborhoods and bolstering neighborhood identity through the design and function of new centers would help make emerging areas of Center City attractive places to live, run a business or visit. For example, development in areas such as the West Morehead/Freedom Drive neighborhood center and around the planned Five Points streetcar station should be guided to ensure optimal urban design, boost the area's economy and foster a special sense of identity.

NCC-2c. Develop new neighborhood centers to improve long-term livability and the ability to attract future residents. Neighborhoods such as Belmont, Optimist Park and Greenville require interventions to fill service gaps and disparities that restrict growth and change. Community development corporations, façade improvement programs and development incentives should continue to be utilized to make these areas prosper.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations

NCC-3. Improve Linkages between Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Centers and Uptown

Complete neighborhoods rely on strong connectivity to adjacent and nearby neighborhoods to ensure provision of daily needs and choices for residents. Physical, social and programmatic connectivity between neighborhoods and Uptown—and from one neighborhood center to another—is critical.

NCC-3a. Make Gold Rush and other transit services convenient, safe and attractive options for accessing each of Center City's neighborhood centers.

Neighborhoods would benefit from a more robust network of frequent and convenient transit routes. Proposed Charlotte streetcar expansions would improve the ability to travel between Center City's neighborhoods without reliance on a car. Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and other partners should work together to identify a dedicated funding source to provide a supplemental neighborhood Gold Rush trolley service with connectivity to Uptown and between neighborhoods. CATS should conduct a study to determine the best means of connecting Center City neighborhoods via transit.

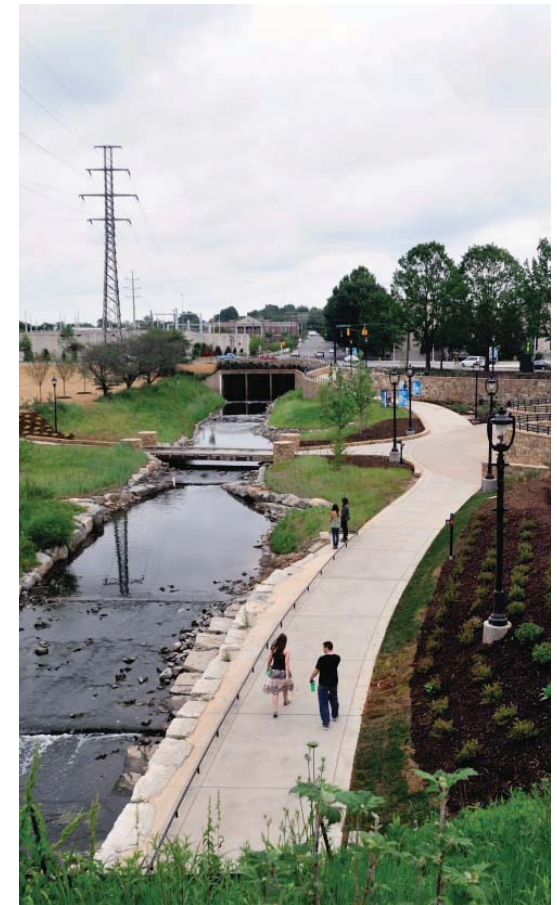
NCC-3b. Enhance functionality of streets and intersections to directly link neighborhoods, centers and Uptown. The street grid needs to be reconnected in key locations to repair obstructions created by freeways, rail lines, difficult intersections and earlier construction that consolidated city

blocks. Several high-priority improvements are listed below. A more complete list can be found in existing neighborhood plans, area plans and the Center City Transportation Plan (CCTP).

- Euclid Avenue and Davidson Street are blocked by on-ramps to I-277. A street connection should be built over the freeway to improve the link between the Dilworth neighborhood and Second Ward including, at a minimum, bicycle and pedestrian bridge facilities.



A dedicated funding source should be identified to provide supplemental Gold Rush service to neighborhoods around Uptown.



Additional connections, such as the Little Sugar Creek Greenway (now complete), are needed to better link Center City's neighborhoods.

neighborhoods of center city recommendations



A pedestrian, bicycle and/or roadway connection should be developed to better connect the western part of Third Ward to the Ballpark Neighborhood and Uptown core.



Streets within and connecting to neighborhood centers should have features that help create a distinctive experience and identity.

- In Second Ward, the historic street grid is further fragmented by the presence of large blocks around Charlotte's civic district. A system of new streets to establish pedestrian and vehicle connections through the blocks between East Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and East 3rd Street would greatly improve access to, through and around Second Ward.
- A new direct rail trail connection across I-277 between South End and Uptown.
- In Third Ward, a new connection under the railroad tracks at West MLK would minimize a significant barrier between Uptown's ward neighborhoods. The connection should include bicycle and pedestrian connections.
- A pedestrian and bicycle connection bridging across the rail yards in North End would provide improved east-west connectivity between Optimist Park and Lockwood.
- Specific improvements to the 36 portals into Uptown across the I-77/I-277 loop should be identified and prioritized.
- The pedestrian experience along streets with direct linkages to neighborhood centers should be improved with a varied palette of plantings, wayfinding signage, street furniture and pedestrian-scaled lighting that can be unique to each area.

NCC-3c. Establish a coalition of organizations to facilitate dialogue and interaction between Center City's neighborhoods. A Center City Council of Neighborhoods should be established with representation from the four Uptown wards and the surrounding neighborhoods. The council should facilitate communication between the neighborhoods and with various agencies to achieve shared objectives and foster 2020 Vision Plan implementation.

network of parks, open space and recreation

In 2020, Center City has a fully interconnected network of parks, open space and recreational facilities that supports and promotes healthy, active lifestyles. Parks are within walking distance of area residents, who are connected to these open spaces by attractive trails, pathways, and greenway trails. People can easily and safely walk or bike to major Center City destinations, the four wards and all of the surrounding neighborhoods. This comprehensive system is integrated with streets and transit lines, and it connects with the Carolina Thread Trail and other regional green spaces. In addition to fostering numerous recreational opportunities, the network incorporates cutting-edge sustainability practices, encourages economic development activity and supports the hospitality industry. Center City's beautiful green network helps make Charlotte an appealing, livable and memorable city.

Existing Situation

Center City's open space system currently offers a variety of experiences, from small, intimate spaces such as 9th Street Park to the large and busy Independence Park and Freedom Park. These places are complemented by several urban plazas, greenway trails with restored creeks, community gardens, and cemeteries. Private landscaped areas and plazas around buildings also provide spaces for greenery, events and public gathering. For example, the Green is a private park offering an escape to a fantasy garden inspired by books. Planned new public spaces such as Romare Bearden Park in Third Ward, a new First Ward Park, and a Brooklyn Village park in Second Ward will bring additional recreational spaces, formal gardens, lawns, water features and play areas to Center City.





Numerous recreational facilities and programs are currently managed by Mecklenburg County and other organizations. Programs include a variety of neighborhood-led and organized sports and youth activities. The Aquatic Center and First Ward Recreation Center are two facilities that have family-friendly environments close to Center City residences and workplaces.

Charlotte residents have expressed that parks and recreation are critical aspects of their vision for the future through their continued support of funding through bonds and other funds. Bond-funded projects such as the extension of the Cedar Yards Greenway Connection, the extension of Stewart and Irwin Creek greenways, and the Greenville Neighborhood Park will further enhance the livability of Center City.

Despite these assets and initiatives, recent analysis indicates that while Uptown has approximately 2.25 acres of park and open space per 1,000 people, the area should have approximately 6 acres per 1,000 people to stay competitive with peer cities and enhance the quality of life of residents, employees and visitors.

Opportunities and Challenges

Center City's network of parks, open space and recreation is a valuable asset that should be leveraged to achieve the overall vision. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Expand and extend the system of existing parks, urban plazas and greenway trails that currently contributes to a high quality of life enjoyed by Center City residents.
- Build upon the existing planning foundation, including the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department (MCPR) Master Plan, which directs funding and sets significant action and performance goals identified by residents for a 10-year period starting in 2008.
- Ensure construction of the three Center City parks and one greenway trail expansion project that are currently planned and designed.
- Link to the existing transit and street infrastructure, including pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding, which can provide enhanced connectivity to parks, greenway trails and open spaces.
- Integrate sustainable stormwater management methods into park and greenway trail design.
- Meet the community's strong desire for more green spaces, trails and recreational opportunities of all types in Center City.

Several barriers must be overcome to achieve the desired vision for a network of parks, recreation and open space. Specific **challenges** include:

- Parks and recreational facilities that are disconnected from each other and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Existing parks that currently do not support the rapidly-growing user demands and needs for facilities and programming.
- Lack of understanding of the significance of the environmental, health and social benefits provided by additional parks and open space.
- An insufficient amount of park space within close proximity to residents and employees throughout Center City.
- A lack of a large, central community gathering space for celebrations and other civic events.
- Inadequate funding to address all of the enhancements and new facilities outlined in the MCPR Master Plan.



Expanding the current park system, including developing an urban plaza with a water feature such as this one in downtown Houston, is an opportunity for Uptown.

Recommendations

Center City's network of diverse, high-quality parks and open spaces supports many recreational opportunities while promoting health and wellness, fostering sustainability, and incorporating nature into the urban setting. The following recommendations and physical strategies will help transform these assets into a **fully integrated system that better serves the growing needs of residents, workers, students and visitors**. Collectively, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1
Urban
Design and
Sustainability



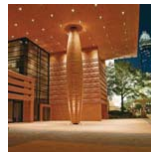
GOAL 2
Regional
Economic
Engine



GOAL 3
Lifelong
Learning



GOAL 4
Premier Arts,
Cultural and
Entertainment
Destination



GOAL 5
Walkable,
Full-Service
Neighborhoods



GOAL 6
Interconnected
Natural and
Recreational
Amenities

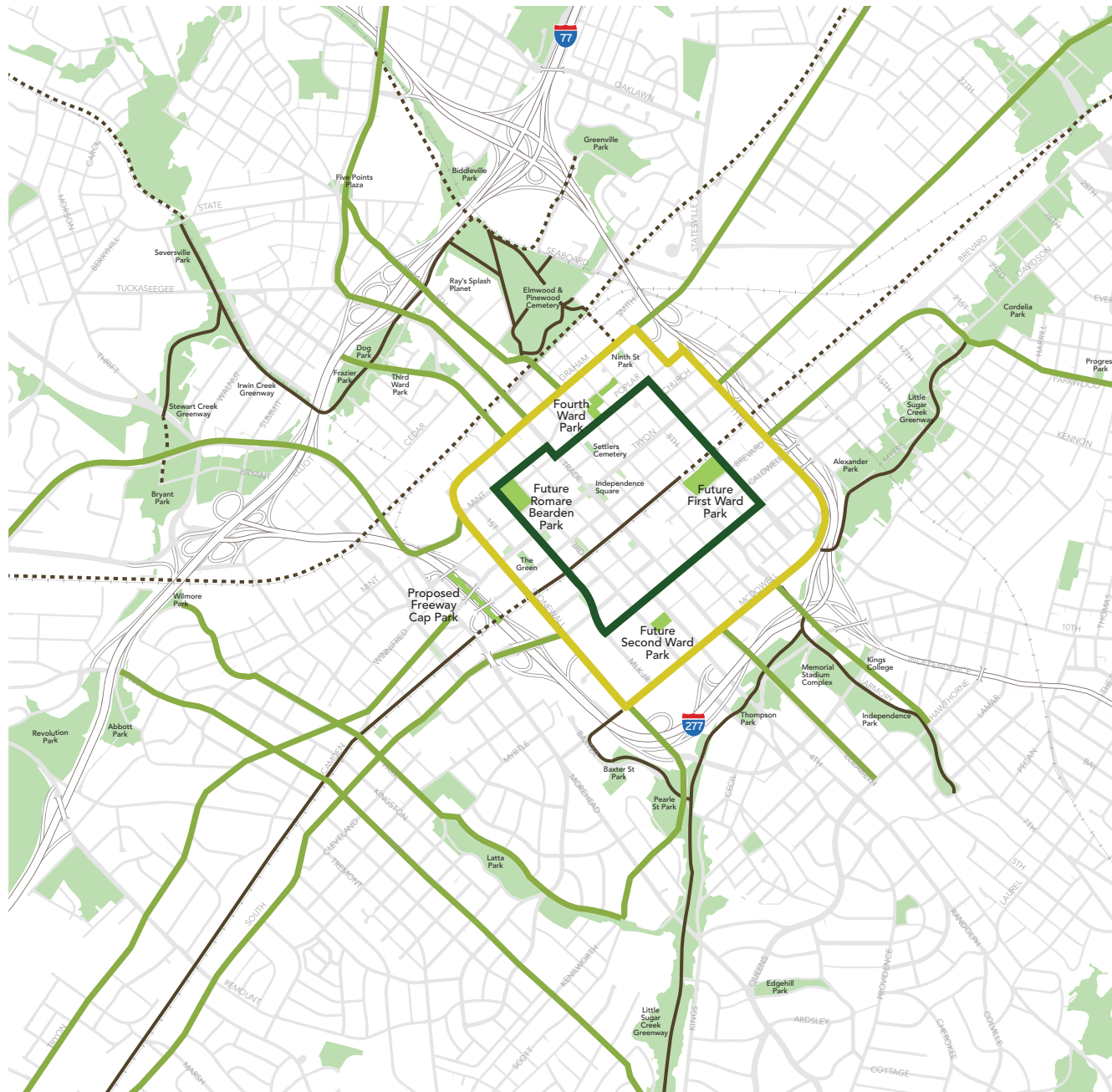


GOAL 7
Thriving
Retail and
Restaurants



GOAL 8
Multi-
Dimensional
Transportation
System





network of parks, open space and recreation physical strategies

Creating a more robust network will involve strengthening pedestrian, bicycle and greenway trail connections; tying together existing open spaces; and creating new urban parks. A “Ward Loop” and “Boulevard Loop” will link existing and future ward parks in Uptown.

- Parks, Plazas and Open Space
- Ward Loop
- Boulevard Loop
- Neighborhood Connection
- Existing Trail/Greenway Trail Connection
- Proposed Trail/Greenway Trail Connector
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail



network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations



POR-1. Develop a Network that is Unique to Charlotte and Center City

Center City's open space network is a critical component of the social, cultural and economic future of Charlotte. A well-connected system with design that is distinctly Charlotte will serve a broad array of people, as well as add value to redevelopment projects, adjacent properties and surrounding neighborhoods.

POR-1a. Improve existing parks and establish new parks to support the growing demands of Center City.

- **Improve existing parks.** Center City should enhance the park network by upgrading the physical condition of existing parks and/or revamping programmatic offerings. Improvements at Frazier, Bryant, and Pearl/Baxter streets parks are needed to further connect to surrounding residential areas, provide respite from the urban bustle and achieve greater connectivity between neighborhoods.
- **Construct planned new parks in First, Second and Third wards.** Construction of three new parks would significantly address the current lack of park space and recreational opportunities in Center City. In Third Ward, plans are underway to build a park to commemorate Charlotte-born artist Romare Bearden, adding diversity to the types of park spaces currently found in Center City. First Ward Park is being planned and designed as part of First Ward Village. A future Second Ward Park is a central element of the area plan. All three would complement the

existing Fourth Ward Park, creating attractive, active spaces and focal points for each of these neighborhoods.

- **Explore opportunities for new parks within and near neighborhood centers.** Whether commercial, educational or civic in character, neighborhood centers are the places where Charlotteans congregate and create a shared sense of community. The addition of parks space to South End and in or adjacent to neighborhood centers, where appropriate, would contribute to each area's sense of place and overall public life. These additions would also help raise the relatively low park and open space per capita ratio in Center City.
- **Take steps to unify ideas in existing plans to build a robust system.** The MCPR Master Plan expresses residents' vision for parks, recreation and open space development and improvement through 2018. The Center City Transportation Plan, Transportation Action Plan, Urban Street Design Guidelines and the guidelines of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) also contain specific recommendations and designs to create a complete pedestrian and bicycle trail system. Ensure that the recommendations of these plans for parks and open space are unified and complementary, and that the plans work together to enhance Charlotte's open space network.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations



A cap park over the John Belk Freeway would be developed with a dynamic, exciting civic gathering space and mixed-use private development framed by dramatic architecture and linking South End with Uptown.

POR-1b. Improve Center City recreational facilities.

- **Upgrade existing recreational facilities.** By restoring and repurposing existing recreational facilities, Charlotte would be able to serve its residents in new ways and minimize future construction costs. Rehabilitation of aging or outdated structures would breathe life into adjacent park spaces and add to the sense of pride in established neighborhoods.
- **Create new active recreational facilities.** Public demand for additional forms of recreation, such as activities at the Grady Cole Center and improvements to the American Legion Memorial Stadium in Center City, may require the construction of facilities such as skate parks, basketball courts, tennis courts and swimming pools. Such venues would attract a new contingent of park users who would benefit from improved health, wellness and fitness through recreation.

POR-1c. Create centrally-located civic gathering spaces.

- **Construct a park as an integral part of a “capped mixed-use development” built over the John Belk Freeway.** A cap park over the John Belk Freeway would include a multi-functional, iconic and exciting civic gathering

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

space that would directly serve nearby neighborhoods of Second Ward, Third Ward, Dilworth and Wilmore. The gathering space would also serve the broader spectrum of Center City residents and workers, and it should have a high profile with special design and significant venues to attract visitors. Construction of the cap could be phased over time, ultimately spanning segments of the freeway between the LYNX Blue Line light rail and Church Street. The park should be activated by a collection of employment, retail and civic uses (see Stonewall/I-277 section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

- Repurpose and better activate Independence Square.** The space at the historic crossroads of Tryon and Trade streets provides an opportunity to improve a true central public gathering space in the heart of Uptown. Although the existing infrastructure is relatively new, Independence Square's four corner plazas could be better linked to one another with materials, furnishings and landscaping. The area should retain iconic public art, seating and water elements while building in greater flexibility to accommodate large gatherings and ongoing programming. The improvement process should include exploration of a curbless environment with removable bollards that would allow the Square to be closed to traffic during special events.

POR-1d. Develop distinct infrastructure that serves multiple purposes while balancing form and function.

- Construct a Ward Loop that connects neighborhoods within Uptown.** Linking the four wards of Uptown via special pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented design along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and Davidson, 9th and Poplar/Mint streets would be a unique, integrating feature of the park and recreation system. The Ward Loop would improve existing streets and support new residential development and neighborhood-supporting retail. While several of these streets have constrained rights-of-way, elements such as distinctive street trees, street furniture, wayfinding and interpretive signage should be woven together to create a consistent, identifiable connector that offers noticeably more green space. The loop would serve both transportation and recreation needs while addressing urban stormwater management with attractively designed vegetated swales and natural areas. The loop could also serve festival uses by connecting and extending the parks.



The four corner plazas framed by the intersection of Tryon and Trade at Independence Square should be better linked to one another.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

- Construct a Boulevard Loop to establish pedestrian-friendly street environments and facilitate safe, efficient vehicle flows within Uptown.** Wide sidewalks, a continuous tree canopy, landscaped medians and sidewalk buffers are essential elements of urban boulevards. When completed, a well-connected Boulevard Loop comprised of pedestrian-oriented streets—McDowell, Graham and Stonewall streets and 11th/12th streets couplet—would establish functional connections around Uptown while linking to the regional roadway system. In addition to facilitating auto traffic, boulevards should feature attractive street tree canopies, wide sidewalks, street furniture, wayfinding, signage and other amenities to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and other users.
- Improve Center City's network of greenway trails, bikeways and trails.** The MCPR Master Plan outlines a strategy to develop 129 miles of trails throughout the County. New trails, bikeways and greenway trails should connect with public transit, parks and public spaces while providing safe and convenient access to Center City neighborhoods. Within parks and greenway trails, trail design should consider a range of users, adjacent properties and land uses, and environmental impacts. Trails could also be located within existing rights-of-way, including streets, railways and utility corridors. Acquisition of additional rights-of-way should be targeted where possible to make key connections between greenway trails, bikeways and trails.
- Complete gaps in the pedestrian network along transit corridors and at stations.** A major pedestrian gap exists where the Rail Trail along the LYNX Blue Line stops at the I-77/I-277 freeway loop as the rail enters Uptown from the South End. While the path is currently connected via surface streets, this link should be built to create better pedestrian and bicycle access to the heart of Uptown. The urban design for the South End segment should be applied all along the rail line. Future rail projects should prioritize trail construction alongside the rail alignment and treat these trails as highly-designed linear park elements.



① The Ward Loop should include special streetscape enhancements that identify it as a unique cultural resource, recreational amenity and path of travel.



② The Boulevard Loop should be an attractive environment that typically balances automobile flows with pedestrian comfort, but could sometimes host weekend events.



network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

POR-2. Expand Requirements for Open Space Enhancements and Develop New Initiatives

Expanding City Center's green network should be the responsibility of both the public and private sectors. Appropriate mechanisms should be employed to ensure that new development responds and contributes to the overall system.

POR-2a. Strengthen policies to require more open space in new developments, including residential and mixed-use projects. One of the best tools the City has to strengthen the parks system is the ability to create new green spaces through development projects. The Uptown Mixed Use District (UMUD) zoning that covers most of Uptown has an urban open space requirement for new office space. During the Mecklenburg County

rezoning and redevelopment processes, staff often requests a dedication of park and open space property, especially in underserved areas of the County. Development within Center City must also dedicate open space as a condition of approval. Detailed standards should be developed that specify the condition of land to be dedicated.

POR-2b. Develop a park impact fee and/or "in-lieu fee" policy that encourages developers to contribute to a fund for park development.

Sometimes the constraints of a development project will not provide adequate land for necessary on-site open space features. In such cases, developers should be granted permission to build on the

condition that a fair, proportionate and competitive fee is paid to Center City's park development fund. Center City and greater Charlotte should emulate cities such as Raleigh, North Carolina, whose park impact fee program has provided funding for the purchase and improvement of numerous parks and open spaces. Fort Worth, Texas, and Portland, Oregon are two examples of cities that have implemented successful in-lieu fee programs to purchase and maintain new parks and open space land.



Greenway trails can be framed by urban development.



New parks and natural spaces can be funded through park impact fees, land dedication or in-lieu fees.

network of parks, open space and recreation recommendations

POR-3. Develop Strategies to Improve Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of all Charlotte residents are paramount. Active and traditional recreation activities should be complemented by interactions with nature, beautification efforts, gardening programs, options for healthy food choices and a lush tree canopy.



Community gardens and urban agriculture should be woven into the fabric of Center City.

POR-3a. Develop a hands-on nature venue near Center City greenway trails. Nature play stimulates curiosity, imagination, physical activity, healthy brain development and social interactions. Natural areas should be restored and enhanced to become integrated within Center City. Portions of Center City's greenway trails and parks should be redesigned, where appropriate, as places where children, adolescents and adults can all interact with nature in hands-on, unstructured free play. These areas should be programmed in partnership with organizations such as the Nature Museum, Carolina Raptor Center, and Discovery Place.

POR-3b. Promote continued community partnerships to beautify Center City. Business organizations, neighborhood associations, individuals and service organizations should be encouraged to help beautify and maintain Center City through adoption of the public realm. This program could be facilitated through sponsorships. It could include a variety of projects such as flower baskets, tree planting projects, art and sculpture, public plaza and trails maintenance, and median plantings.

POR-3c. Create community and rooftop gardens to increase access to healthy foods, educate residents about health and wellness, and facilitate social interaction. Health and food planning has become one of the more pressing issues in cities across the country, including

Charlotte. Community gardens allow residents to lease small garden plots for personal use. Mecklenburg County currently offers garden plots for rent by local residents through an application and fee. A community gardening program should be expanded to promote healthy eating habits, introduce participants to like-minded neighbors, provide hands-on recreational outlets, incorporate stormwater design and encourage sustainable planting. Rooftop gardens are another way that community gardens could fit within the urban environment. These spaces could form a collective network of urban gardens that provide affordable and fresh produce for residents of Center City's neighborhoods.

POR-3d. Continue to establish and support farmers and neighborhood markets that provide local, healthy foods. Some areas in Center City lack access to markets for healthy food and fresh produce. Locally-grown food programs such as farmers markets could provide an opportunity for residents to learn new skills through participation in gardening, urban agriculture and related programs. Partnering with institutions like Johnson & Wales University and CPCC to create community culinary education programs could increase public interest and dialogue about urban food, wellness and health.

dynamic shopping experience

Envision a future in which Center City has a genuinely exciting and memorable shopping experience. Its distinctive niche retail stores, restaurants, bars, cafés, groceries and more support the needs of residents, businesses, employees and visitors. As a result, Center City is a compact and vibrant hub of shopping and round-the-clock entertainment. A strategic mix of local, regional and national establishments helps to distinguish Uptown retail from suburban malls and regional outlet stores. The Dynamic Shopping Experience supports Center City's critical role as a great place to live, work, play, visit—and shop.



Existing Situation

Center City retail offerings have significantly improved over the last decade, with the emergence of a range of restaurants, cafés and bars lining the streets, the development of the EpiCentre and Metropolitan retail centers, and new retail space in the Duke Energy Center. However, the shopping experience in Charlotte's downtown is fairly monotonous and has yet to develop a range of "consumer goods"—such as apparel, shoes, cosmetics, specialty items, furniture and other lifestyle-related items—that would establish it as a strong retail destination. While trendy clothing shops and specialty stores are desirable, it has been difficult to attract national and local retailers that offer these goods.

The greater Charlotte area is generally well served by a range of retail options, with per capita shopping center square footage approximately 40 percent higher than the average for U.S. metropolitan markets. Regional retail includes numerous malls, outlet centers, "lifestyle centers," high-end stores, and other destination and neighborhood retail.



Center City neighborhoods adjacent to Uptown contain a varying mix of shopping activity. While several neighborhoods have successful retail centers, many neighborhoods, such as those along Beatties Ford Road west of Uptown, lack adequate local stores and services. Both Uptown and its adjacent neighborhoods have unmet potential for neighborhood-serving retail, including supermarkets and businesses which meet everyday needs.

Uptown retail space totals approximately two million square feet and represents slightly more than six percent of the total retail space in the region. A recent analysis determined that approximately 400,000 to 800,000 square feet of additional retail space targeting shoppers' goods could be supported in Uptown by 2020. The new retail space in the EpiCentre and Metropolitan already accounts for 200,000 square feet of that figure, leaving an adjusted amount of supportable space of approximately 200,000 to 600,000 square feet. By comparison, this represents the size range for just one lifestyle center.

Due to these tight market conditions, many City Center retail developments have benefited from subsidies. Some projects have received funding assistance through synthetic tax-increment financing. Using this funding tool, developer costs associated with infrastructure and related physical improvements are reimbursed from a portion of the future increase in property taxes paid by the project.

Opportunities and Challenges

Center City's shopping environment holds the potential for targeted, strategic growth. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Increase the number of specialized retail and services in Center City, particularly building on Uptown's solid base of dining and entertainment establishments.
- Target the area's well-educated, professional workforce and growing residential population.
- Support and connect to Center City's arts, culture and entertainment corridors and clusters.
- Augment the existing and support the planned neighborhood centers in the four Uptown wards and the surrounding Center City neighborhoods.
- Leverage the unique downtown environment and experience that only Center City can offer in the region.

Center City faces several challenges that must be addressed in order to achieve the desired vision for an exciting and memorable shopping experience. Specific **challenges** include:

- The presence of several regional shopping centers in close proximity to the downtown trade area that have retail offerings that provide more choice and convenience to suburban residents than existing Center City retail.
- A general lack of differentiation in product mix and target markets between new Uptown retail and regional shopping destinations.
- Absence of a coordinated retail strategy, incentive program or implementation plan.
- A lack of a critical mass of shoppers to help attract the right mix of retail and services to Center City destinations and create successful retail corridors or clusters.
- A limited number of suitable sites for new Uptown retail development in close proximity to existing Center City retail nodes.
- Current market forces and inadequate street frontage space that inhibit the placement of small, locally-owned retail.
- The inward orientation of Overstreet Mall, providing poor pedestrian access to its retailers who occupy interior second-story space and discouraging street-level foot traffic, which is critical to the success of urban retail.

Recommendations

The Dynamic Shopping Experience should allow residents and visitors to fulfill most of their consumer needs within Center City's urban shopping districts. Catering to a multitude of preferences and expectations, these shopping areas should have something to offer everyone—from health and wellness retailers to specialty foods purveyors to designer apparel—and be designed for pedestrian comfort and access to transit. The following recommendations and physical strategies will ensure the **continued success and vitality of Center City's urban shopping experience**. Collectively, the recommendations support the following overall 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1
Urban
Design and
Sustainability



GOAL 2
Regional
Economic
Engine



GOAL 3
Lifelong
Learning



GOAL 4
Premier Arts,
Cultural and
Entertainment
Destination



GOAL 5
Walkable,
Full-Service
Neighborhoods



GOAL 6
Interconnected
Natural and
Recreational
Amenities

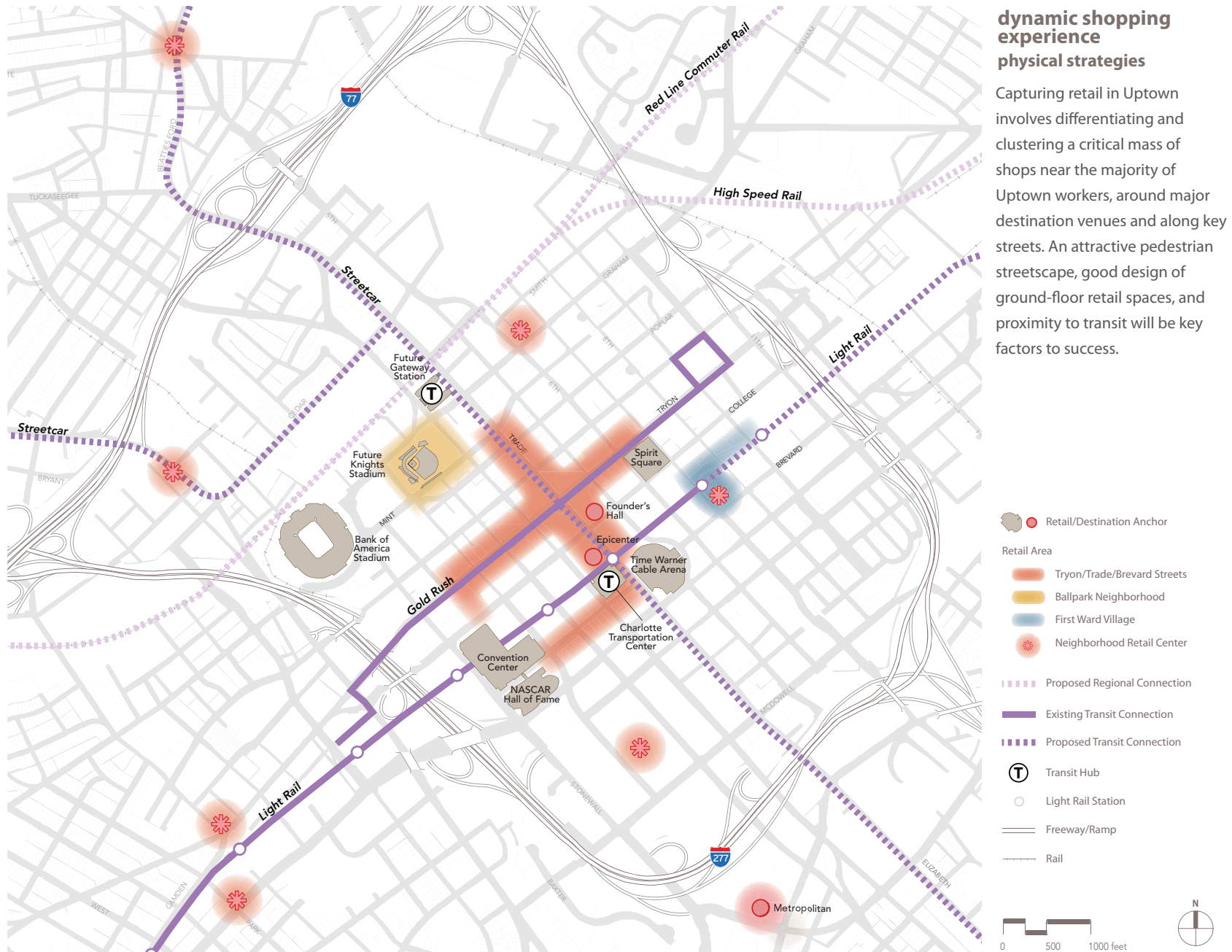


GOAL 7
Thriving
Retail and
Restaurants



GOAL 8
Multi-
Dimensional
Transportation
System





dynamic shopping experience recommendations



DSE-1. Develop and Implement a Cohesive Retail Strategy

Center City's retail success will not occur through direct competition with other existing shopping areas in Charlotte. Rather, retail in Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods needs to provide complementary offerings that establish a distinct market position. This position should focus on Center City's strengths by providing unique offerings that attract daytime workers, visitors from out of town, and residents seeking a variety of dining, entertainment and shopping choices.

DSE-1a. Create strategic retail clusters along Tryon, Trade, College and Brevard streets, The Green and in the Ballpark Neighborhood. The moderate amount of potential market support means that a strategic approach should create differentiated clusters that concentrate retail activity and complement each other.

- **Tryon Street**, as Uptown's traditional retail corridor, provides the most diverse mix of dining, entertainment, apparel, specialty stores and services. New and improved buildings along Tryon Street should be designed to better accommodate street-oriented shops.
- **Trade Street** presents an opportunity to create neighborhood-scale retail with expanded specialty food and local-serving goods and services to support Uptown's growing residential population. New streetcar service would add transit riders to the customer mix.
- **Brevard Street** presents a longer-term

opportunity for more visitor-oriented dining, entertainment and stores. This retail could evolve in an organic manner into a "stroll district" with targeted infill development and ground-floor sports-related retail between the Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame, Time Warner Cable Arena, and the Charlotte Transportation Center.

- **College Street** is already home to Founder's Hall and EpiCentre. The core retail segment along College Street nearest Trade Street provides a critical connection between Independence Square and Brevard Street.
- **The Green**, with its strategic location and linkages to the Levine Center for the Arts, Charlotte Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and new Duke Energy Center, offers the potential for higher-end dining, apparel boutiques, and specialty retail and services.
- **Ballpark Neighborhood** would be at the crossroads of transit and a variety of activity in Third Ward, offering the potential for restaurants, bars and sports-themed stores, as well as visitor- and commuter-oriented retail in and around the Gateway Station.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-1b. Enhance the pedestrian environment to support retail clusters. Streetscape improvements—including widened sidewalks (where possible), more street trees, and high-quality materials and fixtures—could visually identify shopping areas, help connect them and encourage foot traffic. Improvements should also include new LED street lighting that is energy efficient and creates a more enjoyable nighttime environment to encourage pedestrian activity. Physical improvements alone may not attract new retail, but combining them with new mixed-use development that leverages retail market potential is a proven revitalization strategy. Initial streetscape

improvements should be focused in the priority districts listed above, which either have the greatest existing concentration of shops and/or the strongest future potential to attract new retail.

DSE-1c. Establish neighborhood retail nodes in the four wards and Center City surrounding neighborhoods. Beyond the strategic retail clusters, there are opportunities to address unmet demand for neighborhood-serving retail in the four wards and surrounding areas. Certain neighborhoods are already experiencing increased mixed-use development. These include traditional retail districts along Elizabeth and in the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood, as well as the Metropolitan mixed-use lifestyle center in Midtown. More than one ward or neighborhood could share a retail node. Since the amount, location and timing of neighborhood retail is driven by current and future residential population and demographics, new development should be guided by findings in completed market demand studies. The findings from this research could be used to create developer and retailer interest in Uptown neighborhood retail.

DSE-1d. Establish coordinated branding, marketing and retailer recruitment in Center City to better leverage existing and future retail assets.

- New and innovative **marketing strategies** should be created that continue to promote the

Find Your Center (FYC) brand. With elements tailored to existing and potential Uptown employers, employees, residents and visitors, the marketing strategy should tie into existing programs and events and serve as the basis for new ones.

- A **retailer recruitment strategy** should identify retailers that would be a good fit with the Center City, facilitate their interest, and introduce them to project and site opportunities. Such recruitment could span a range of targets, from retailers looking to open temporary “pop-up stores” to test new concepts and locations, to targeted attraction of strong independent retailers already in the region, to marketing to potential anchors for new projects. Strong and capable independent retailers are a particular priority because they are willing to take risks that national tenants won’t. In turn, their success could catalyze national retailer interest. The retailer recruitment program should also target landlords with upcoming lease renewals to educate them on the potential for placing higher-quality retail in their buildings.

DSE-1e. Provide additional on-street parking with short-term time limits to promote turnover. As identified in the Curb Lane Management Study, short-term on-street parking should be maximized in retail nodes to support retail growth.



Coordinated marketing and branding efforts should be developed to support the 2020 Vision and Dynamic Shopping Experience strategies.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-2. Differentiate the Center City Shopping Experience

Given the small amount of retail in Uptown and the large number of shopping opportunities regionally, it will be important to encourage the development of unique shopping choices in Center City that are distinct from suburban offerings.

DSE-2a. Construct the Charlotte City Market.

The Charlotte City Market would be a full-fledged public market that offers a broad range of high-quality fresh and prepared foods, with an emphasis on local produce. It would accommodate a limited amount of complementary food-themed retail, along with crafts. It could also incorporate sit-down restaurants within the facility or adjacent to it. The market would attract workers for lunch and for grocery shopping on the way home; Uptown residents for regular grocery shopping; Charlotte residents seeking food products not typically available in local supermarkets; and visitors looking to experience a unique and dynamic market setting.

DSE-2b. Develop a sports-oriented retail center or district. Development of a sports-oriented retail center or district at the west end of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and adjacent to the planned Knights Stadium and existing Bank of

America Stadium is a priority. This could feature a mix of dining and entertainment uses, as well as recreational sports facilities and public gathering places to support the Ballpark Neighborhood. Such a project could serve as a gathering place for major sporting and other events, similar to the LA Live mixed-use project adjacent to the Staples Center in Los Angeles.

DSE-2c. Encourage food choices by allowing more food carts and trucks to operate in Uptown.

Small-scale food stands, along with catering trucks, have emerged in numerous cities in the past several years as excellent opportunities to expand food choices, particularly for downtown workers. They also allow new chefs an opportunity to experiment with concepts and grow successful ones into new restaurants. Going far beyond the traditional hot dog cart, these stands offer creative new food choices, can stimulate foot traffic and can activate the edges of parking areas. The City should work with property owners and vendors to allow small-scale food stands on the periphery of parking lots. Food trucks should be allowed to serve Uptown customers in designated locations.



The Charlotte City Market will provide a range of goods for residents, workers and visitors, similar to this market in downtown Milwaukee.



Catering trucks and food stands should be placed throughout Center City to expand eating choices and activate the streets.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-3. Use Effective Storefront Design and Develop Flexible Ground-Floor Spaces



Street vendors and temporary storefronts help to activate the sidewalk environment while providing low upstart cost opportunities for new retail ventures.



Retail shops and cafés should look outward and “spill out” into plazas and alley spaces.

To compete with the ample shopping opportunities around the Charlotte region, quality storefront design is essential to the Center City retail experience. New development should also anticipate future demand for retail by incorporating flexible ground-floor spaces that can be converted to shops as the market grows.

DSE-3a. Continue to develop attractive ground-floor retail space to attract existing and new tenants.

To enhance the physical and retail environment, continue to implement the City’s policies that require the creation of ground-floor space to accommodate retail uses in new buildings and existing buildings as they are renovated. Both new and improved spaces should be configured so that they have street frontage and are not hidden from street view. Ground-floor restaurants should have operable storefront windows, transparent façades and sidewalk café areas. Transforming out-of-date street-level floor plans in existing buildings is oftentimes more cost effective and faster to accomplish than creating new structures.

DSE-3b. Ground floors should include public/semi-public uses and be accessible from multiple points of entry from the building’s primary street façade. Retail uses should have individual, well-articulated entrances that are oriented to the street. To create a thriving retail environment, shoppers must have the sense that ground-floor uses are permeable and friendly. Additional doorways

or improved entries should be made to existing spaces to better link to transit, dining options, gathering spaces, and nearby high-traffic arts and entertainment destinations.

DSE-3c. Create new public spaces that consist of renovated or enhanced streets, or strategically selected places that are directly linked to the street system. Public gathering opportunities—places to sip a coffee, people-watch or chat with friends—should be created along existing streets or at other strategic places such as plazas or alleyways. New storefronts, shops and other retail/services should spring from the creation of street-oriented public spaces.

DSE-3d. Expand the area of City Center where current regulations require design and development practices that foster a street-level retail experience. While the market demand for leasable retail space may be limited today, it is important to ensure that there is adequate opportunity for ground-floor retail in the future. In unfortunate cases, ground-floor locations are developed as non-retail space in a manner that makes future conversion to retail awkward or infeasible. The City’s Uptown Mixed Use District (UMUD) zoning encourages active and engaging façades. This special overlay should be expanded to areas of Tryon, Trade and College streets and the Ballpark Neighborhood.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-4. Facilitate the Long-Term Transition of the Overstreet Mall

To support making Center City's streets a more thriving, accessible shopping environment, retailers should be encouraged to relocate to street-level locations outside of the Overstreet Mall. Space inside the Overstreet Mall could work better for non-retail-oriented services targeting Uptown business customers that benefit from synergies and adjacencies to this customer base.

DSE-4a. Adopt a policy that ceases the expansion of the Overstreet Mall, underground tunnel connections between buildings, and other infrastructure that discourages street-level pedestrian activity. In support of this policy, a strategy should be developed to work with Uptown landlords to relocate Overstreet Mall tenants that carry consumer goods to ground-floor spaces as lease renewals come up and limit replacement tenants to non-retail business service type tenants.

DSE-4b. Develop ground-floor retail space adjacent to the street-level entrances of the Overstreet Mall. Much can be done to enhance Uptown's shopping identity by developing street-level shops and services at entrances to the Overstreet Mall. This could entice Uptown workers who utilize the mall for circulation between buildings. New street-level retail would not be subject to the mall's early closing hours, allowing stores to stay open later and giving customers more shopping flexibility.



The Overstreet Mall should undergo functional and aesthetic changes to improve the mall entrances and strengthen connections with street-level retail.

DSE-4c. Redesign hidden entrances to the Overstreet Mall to make them more visible and inviting from the street. Until retail business transitions out of the mall to street-level commercial units, there should be improvements to encourage circulation between existing street retail and the mall and to make people more aware of retail offerings inside the facility. As with other storefront façade improvements, improving the ground-level physical presence of the mall entrances would improve the overall quality of the nearby urban environment.



The Overstreet Mall should be re-programmed to focus on business-oriented services.

dynamic shopping experience recommendations

DSE-5. Develop Innovative Financial Tools and Technical Assistance Programs



Tenant improvements and façade improvements should contribute to a vibrant street level experience for patrons and pedestrians.



Center City should recruit fashion-forward urban retailers who create exciting storefront experiences, such as Zara.

The relatively modest level of current Uptown retail activity means that both tenants and developers see new retail projects and stores as a high-risk activity with uncertain returns. Creating catalyst projects and tenancies that can demonstrate that the market is ready for retail will be key to generating investment. However, catalyst projects and tenancies will require the use of innovative financial tools and other technical assistance to mitigate the risks they present.

DSE-5a. Explore land assembly and write-down opportunities. Development of a new Uptown shopping center, a sports-oriented retail center or district, or a new stand-alone anchor tenant would necessitate assembly of a sufficiently large site from multiple parcels. Developers are typically willing to take on the risk of assembly for only a limited number of sites; more complex assemblies require the City or another entity to lead the effort. Depending on project economics, it may also be necessary to provide a subsidy by writing down a portion or most of the land value of assembled sites prior to transfer to a developer or retailer.

DSE-5b. Create provisions for shared parking or access to publicly-financed parking. Parking costs are often a primary driver of project feasibility. Dining and retail uses typically have peak parking demand periods that are complementary to office uses. A program to facilitate evening and weekend retail use of office parking spaces—with offsetting

reductions in the number of spaces retail projects are required to build—could enhance feasibility. This could be complemented as needed by construction of publicly-financed parking garages in strategic locations to meet project parking requirements.

DSE-5c. Develop a program for tenant improvement assistance. Tenant improvement costs for a new retailer can be expensive, ranging from \$100,000 to upwards of \$1 million for a large anchor user. As an incentive to attract desired types of retailers, the City should establish a program that provides a subsidy for a portion of these costs. Such a program could be funded from the creation of a tax increment finance district per recent state legislation or through use of a portion of the increased sales tax revenues generated by the new retailers, as is done in Washington, D.C.'s program.

DSE-5d. Continue to assist with storefront façade improvements. Uptown has a very limited number of remaining historic buildings that provide good locations for innovative retail. However, it does have a large number of existing office buildings whose street levels are not designed to support retail uses. The existing storefront façade improvement program provides grants, forgivable loans or purchase of façade easements and could assist in the redesign of street-level office space to support retail uses. It should also be promoted in neighborhood centers.

integrated transportation network

The future Center City is connected with an Integrated Transportation Network, with all of the right linkages for people to easily and seamlessly travel within and between Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods and greater Charlotte. Streets are for everyone—Center City’s roadway network is designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Streets are also active urban spaces, connecting major destinations and neighborhoods in a quality, experiential way. Charlotte’s Center City is where the region’s transportation systems converge, with Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center as dual hubs of local and regional transit; as well as autos, buses, taxis, streetcars, light rail and high speed rail. The stations are redeveloped as major mixed-use employment centers linked by a streetcar line along Trade Street, helping to make that street a distinctive experience between the two stations. State-of-the-art technology plays a critical role in guiding people comfortably, efficiently and accurately to and from their destinations. With premier services and unparalleled connectivity, Center City truly is the hub of all local and regional mobility.

Existing Situation

The interrelationship between Center City’s transportation and land uses greatly affects the quality of life for residents and commuters. The ability to shape future growth and economic development in the City core—in functional, programmatic and aesthetic ways—also relies heavily on this important relationship. The existing transportation system must be adapted to accommodate future demand for access to Uptown, major employment centers and the surrounding neighborhoods of Center City.

Automobile travel times within the region have increased dramatically since 1990. According to the 2007 Charlotte Regional Indicators Project, the average annual travel delay per peak traveler nearly doubled from 1995 through 2005. Many local roadways that provide access from adjacent residential neighborhoods are congested at certain times of day.



In addition, highways such as the I-77/I-277 freeway loop and the area's rail lines limit connectivity between neighborhoods. Recognizing this disconnect, the Center City Transportation Plan identifies several realignments to improve interstate ramps. The plan also identifies new street locations, reconfigurations and other enhancements to improve connectivity.

Fortunately, Charlotte has a strong base for future transit options. The LYNX Blue Line light rail, operated by the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), began service in 2007. The line has 15 stations and runs through Uptown and South End, before paralleling South Boulevard to its southern terminus just north of I-485. CATS also operates an extensive bus transit system with local and express buses throughout the metro region. The 2030 Transit Corridor System Plan adopted in 2006 outlines future expansion for light rail, commuter rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit along five key corridors in Charlotte.

The quality of pedestrian connectivity varies throughout Center City. Many streets and buildings were primarily built to cater to automobile travel. As a result, numerous streets are lined with blank walls and parking structure entrances; others have inadequate sidewalks and poor streetscape design. Many streets lack active ground-floor retail spaces. There is a significant number of surface parking lots and fast-moving, auto-oriented roadways that create uncomfortable and unattractive pedestrian environments. The core of Tryon Street in Uptown is an example of a street that fosters pedestrian mobility and comfort with active ground floors, wide sidewalks, street furniture and bustling activity.

There are limited options for bicyclists entering Uptown. Extensive freeway on- and off-ramps, busy streets, and a lack of bikeways all discourage bike activity. However, the recent City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan sets forward a strategy for an accessible, connected and safe network of bicycle facilities in the City of Charlotte, including Center City.

Opportunities and Challenges

Center City already has numerous assets and opportunities upon which to create a more integrated transportation system. Specifically, there are **opportunities** to:

- Take advantage of Center City's position as the geographic heart of the metropolitan region and roadway network.
- Create stronger links along the 36 portals/entrances into Uptown from the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Leverage existing transit, which includes traditional bus, the Gold Rush rubber tire trolley and the LYNX Blue Line light rail, and benefit from its strong access to centers of employment, shopping and entertainment.
- Expand the existing transit system with light rail extensions, streetcar service and commuter rail, as well as high speed rail as part of a future network along the Eastern Seaboard.
- Capitalize on the significant synergy that would occur between two future transportation hubs, the Charlotte Transportation Center and the Gateway Station, to foster transit-oriented development (TOD) and activate Trade Street and all of Uptown.
- Use the air rights over the transportation hubs to catalyze development that would benefit from the ease of access and transportation options.

- Expand Transportation Demand Management (TDM) practices and programs to increase the number of people travelling by modes other than the automobile.
 - Take advantage of Center City's proximity to the Charlotte Douglas International Airport.
 - Build upon the presence of several Signature Streets to establish a walkable, pedestrian-oriented Center City.
 - Improve existing and future greenway trail linkages to improve bike connectivity.
- Several obstacles may prove problematic to achieving a more diversified and efficient transportation network in Center City. Specific **challenges** include:
- The percentage of drivers commuting to work alone has increased and has remained high since the 1990s, encouraged by subsidized parking provided by major employers.
 - Center City and the region are experiencing longer commute times with more drivers on the road.
 - Competition from suburban sites for locating businesses has increased due to the common perception of easier parking and access than Center City.
 - Few streets in Uptown are pedestrian-friendly, and the I-77/I-277 freeway loop acts as a barrier separating Uptown and the surrounding neighborhoods.
 - Funding for road improvements is becoming increasingly difficult to secure while costs are rising.
 - Bicycle facilities are lacking that cater to the full range cyclists' abilities, needs and comfort levels.
 - Parking structures and surface lots without any use other than weekday business parking are a dominant feature in Center City Charlotte, particularly in Uptown.

Recommendations

A fully Integrated Transportation Network will provide residents, employees and visitors with safe, convenient and affordable access and mobility. It will also play a key role in Center City's economic, physical, social and cultural development. The following recommendations and physical strategies will **move Charlotte toward a transportation future that is on par with the nation's greatest cities**. Together, the recommendations support these 2020 Vision Plan goals:

GOAL 1 Urban Design and Sustainability



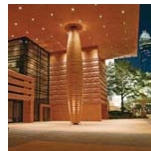
GOAL 2 Regional Economic Engine



GOAL 3 Lifelong Learning



GOAL 4 Premier Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Destination



GOAL 5 Walkable, Full-Service Neighborhoods



GOAL 6 Interconnected Natural and Recreational Amenities

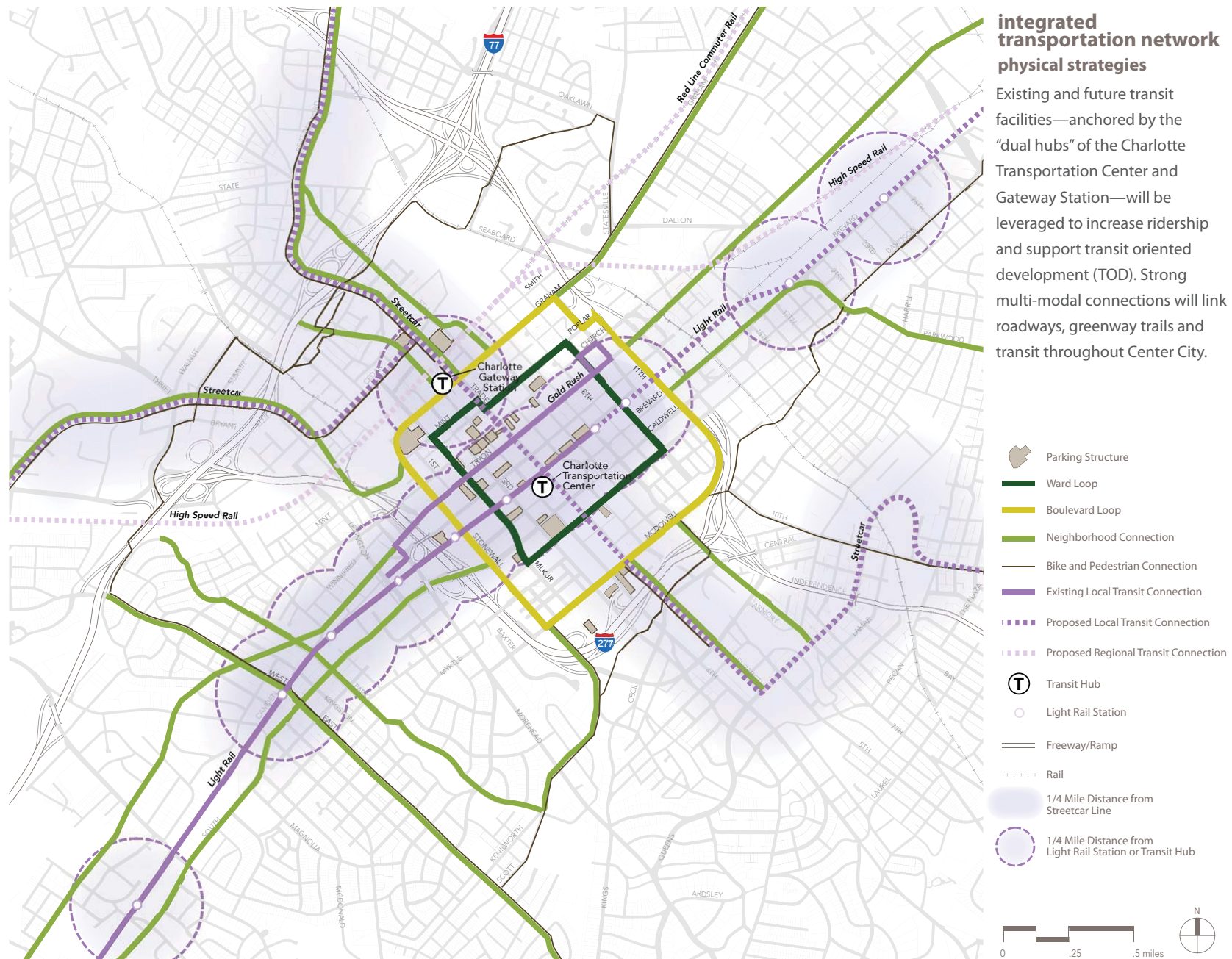


GOAL 7 Thriving Retail and Restaurants



GOAL 8 Multi- Dimensional Transportation System





integrated transportation network recommendations



ITN-1. Leverage Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center and Maximize Transit-Oriented Development Opportunities

Charlotte has the opportunity to develop a unique dual hub transit system as a regional nexus of transportation and employment that links local and regional buses, Gold Rush rubber tire trolley, streetcar, light rail and high speed regional rail with transit-oriented development (TOD). The location of the multi-modal stations at either end of West Trade Street would catalyze development between the two hubs and energize the corridor linking them. The two stations should be developed as dense mixed-use employment centers with strong connections to each other, other Uptown destinations and the surrounding neighborhoods. Other TOD opportunities should be fostered around existing and future LYNX light rail stations, as well as future streetcar lines.

ITN-1a. Build the new multi-modal regional Gateway Station so that it can grow with the increasing demands for transit, offices and retail.

The future development of Gateway Station is one of the most exciting city-building opportunities for Charlotte. The multi-modal transit center should be a significant, mixed-use architectural icon and should be envisioned as a second major employment center for Charlotte's Center City. The station would provide Center City with a range of transportation options including Amtrak passenger and CATS commuter trains as well as local and regional bus service such as Greyhound. The site would directly link to streetcar service along Trade Street, and also serve as the major anchor of a new employment hub.

Gateway Station should be developed to allow for future vertical expansion as market demand grows and commuter and high speed rail service is added. Though various services would be managed by different transportation agencies, passengers should experience the station as one seamless operation. An urban design study should be prepared in conjunction with engineering plans, to make sure that issues related to neighborhood connectivity, function, infrastructure and design needs are addressed (see Ballpark Neighborhood section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

ITN-1b. Redevelop the Charlotte Transportation Center as a mixed-use, state-of-the-art transportation station.

This center would work in tandem with Gateway Station to support the continued infill of Uptown Charlotte and expand Center City mobility options. The station would provide enhanced bus service, efficient connections to the LYNX Blue Line light rail station and platform, real-time arrival and departure information, and direct access to streetcar lines. Together, Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center would provide a seamless combination of local and regional connectivity. When fully implemented, these two major mixed-use hubs could work in a coordinated way to improve routing, circulation and accessibility and provide a full range of transit options (see Charlotte Transportation Center section in Chapter 4: Focus Areas for more detail).

integrated transportation network recommendations



Gateway Station could be the hub of a major new mixed-use transit-oriented development, like the future Transbay Terminal in San Francisco.

ITN-1c. Establish strong pedestrian and transit connections between Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center. To fully realize the potential of a dual hub system, Gateway Station and the Charlotte Transportation Center must feel like they are closely linked along the corridor of Trade Street. Strong pedestrian connections and frequent low-cost or free streetcar service should be established along the Signature Street. Related recommendations in the Center City Transportation Plan should be implemented. Streetscape design elements should emphasize the importance of these connections and be supported by new office uses; unique architecture; active ground-floor uses; plazas and open spaces; and amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

ITN-1d. Direct investments toward new TOD projects along transit corridors and within Focus Areas such as the Ballpark Neighborhood, West Trade Corridor, Charlotte Transit Center and South End. The recommendations of the Center, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework should be implemented at five linear Growth Corridors along high-capacity transportation routes that extend from Center City to the edge of Charlotte. This guide provides development recommendations such as pedestrian-oriented villages designed to include a mix of complementary moderate- to high-intensity uses.

ITN-1e. Create partnerships between private ventures, public agencies and neighborhood groups to ensure successful TODs. Incentives should be provided to attract developers and project investment such as “fast track” permitting, property tax abatement and density bonuses. Potential commercial tenants should be marketed to through a portfolio of available properties and provision of incentives for local merchants. Successfully completed projects should be documented and used to demonstrate efficacy and gain interest and support.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-2. Increase Transportation Choices for People Who Live, Work and Play in Center City

To achieve the goal of decreasing the number of people who drive alone to Center City, the full range of transportation options must be expanded and promoted to residents, workers and visitors. A multi-modal strategy—with emphasis on pedestrian, bicycle and transit mobility in addition to accommodating the automobile—could support existing and future transportation demand and could help alleviate issues related to congestion, air quality and public health.

ITN-2a. Initiate a car share program that provides mobility options and helps to reduce the number of cars in Center City. A comprehensive and flexible car share program should serve a range of people. Employers could reduce parking provisions and the number of employees who drive. Parking currently occupied by fleet vehicles could be freed up by enrollment in the program. Workers could use cars to run errands during the day and avoid the cost of commuting and parking their personal vehicles. Residents may need fewer household vehicles and would have access to a greater range of vehicle types. Finally, visitors could use existing memberships for exploring Center City neighborhoods and other areas of Charlotte.

ITN-2b. Develop a discounted pass program that integrates multiple transportation modes.

A primary advantage of living and working in Center City is the growing range of transportation options that are available. To encourage use of these options, a pass program should be developed that accommodates residents and employees who use a variety of modes for their commute and errands. A monthly or quarterly pass should include multiple levels and entail a combination of daily parking, transit rides, car share and bike share usage.

ITN-2c. Employ multiple strategies to increase transit ridership. The Charlotte region is making large investments in transit with the greatest concentration of amenities converging in Center City. Programs should continue to be explored to increase transit ridership. Strategies may include a fare-free zone, discounted individual pass programs, employer-provided passes, additional amenities at transit stops and on transit vehicles, smart phone applications, and more.

ITN-2d. Invest in new transportation technology.

The City of Charlotte should support investments in applications that allow connection to real-time information about Center City transportation. The forthcoming 2012 Democratic National Convention can be used as a catalyst for development of these systems and behaviors.



Smart phone technology should be used to connect people to a range of transportation choices.



A comprehensive car share program should be developed to increase mobility options, reduce parking needs and decrease the number of cars in Center City.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-3. Improve Network Navigation, Comfort and Connectivity

Setting the stage for healthy and sustainable transportation choices will include creating a network of multi-modal streets that balance the needs and preferences of a range of users.

ITN-3a. Undertake a comprehensive study of the I-77/I-277 loop. With its wide lanes, fast-moving traffic, and multiple bridges and tunnels, the freeway loop is the biggest obstacle to connectivity in Center City. A full analysis of the system should be undertaken to investigate the possibility of reducing the number of interchanges; shortening on-ramps and off-ramps; changing the design and/or location of overpasses and underpasses; and improving connectivity for bicycles, pedestrians and transit. This study should be a collaborative undertaking of the relevant transportation agencies including Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT) and North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department and other stakeholder agencies.

ITN-3b. Use traffic calming techniques to better facilitate walking and biking on Center City streets. Efforts must continue to slow traffic speeds on Center City streets. A key goal of the Center City Transportation Study is to ensure that all streets inside the I-77/I-277 loop are safe and comfortable for pedestrians and cyclists. Continued efforts should include, but not be limited to, reducing the number

and width of travel lanes in strategic locations; adding on-street parking where feasible; exploring curb extensions that reduce pedestrian crossing distances; increasing pedestrian amenities; creating pedestrian-priority streets that provide increased pedestrian crossing time; and enforcing speed limits.

ITN-3c. Restore key connections within the existing street grid to create a stronger and more navigable roadway network. New streets and street segments should be constructed to improve connectivity and meet special needs. These new or modified streets include those in the vicinity of Gateway Station and Third Ward Park; an overpass over I-277 and adjacent to the LYNX Blue Line light rail from Second Ward to Dilworth; street extensions and a new street from 7th Street to 11th Street paralleling the light rail extension in First Ward; and neighborhood residential streets in the future redevelopment of Second Ward.

ITN-3d. Implement the Boulevard Loop and Ward Loop to create attractive circulator routes within the core of Uptown. The peripheral Boulevard Loop should feature grand tree-lined boulevards along Graham, Stonewall and McDowell streets and a one-way couplet on 11th and 12th streets. The Boulevard Loop should have enhanced landscaping and great pedestrian amenities, as well as be integrated with the recently installed

signage system promoting wayfinding and convenient connections to the freeway loop. The City of Charlotte should explore requesting control of Graham Street within the city limits from NCDOT to evaluate the acceptance of responsibility for the design and maintenance of the roadway. The Ward Loop should foster pedestrian- and bike-friendly neighborhood connections between the four wards. The loop should include Poplar/Mint streets, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK), and Davidson and 9th streets (see recommendation POR-1d in Network of Parks, Open Space and Recreation section of Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies).



9th Street in First Ward already has streetscape design that lends itself to becoming a key link on the Ward Loop.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-4. Create a True City of Bikes

Bicycling is healthy, sustainable and convenient. It should be a preferred mode of transportation for getting around Center City. Differences between user abilities, comfort levels and trip purposes will require a range of on-street and off-street connections, end-of-trip facilities, bike sharing, signage and wayfinding.

ITN-4a. Create a network of dedicated and shared bicycle facilities to foster easy access and mobility throughout Center City. The area should include options for bicyclists ranging from shared roadways to bicycle lanes to multi-use pathways, including facilities that foster quick, efficient and safe bicycling options for commuters. Riders of different ages and skill levels have varied comfort levels and preferences when it comes to bicycle facilities. While all streets within Center City should accommodate bicycles in the travel lanes, CDOT should explore opportunities for additional separated bicycle facilities such as “cycle tracks”, bicycle lanes and shared lanes on streets with low traffic speeds and volumes.

ITN-4b. Provide a range of quality end-of-trip facilities throughout Center City to encourage and support bicycle commuting. A variety of short-term and long-term bicycle parking solutions should be implemented in Center City. These should

range from additional bike racks to shower facilities for employees and residents. Reduced auto parking requirements could be linked to provision of bicycle parking facilities. In addition, clothes changing and shower facilities should be provided at or near major employment centers.

ITN-4c. Develop a bike share system for residents, employees and visitors to offer flexibility for those wanting an alternative way of getting around Center City. A bike share system can significantly reduce the use of automobiles in Center City by providing employees, students and residents with a quick and inexpensive means of running errands and making impromptu trips during the day. Electric bicycles can broaden the appeal of the program and extend the range of trips that could be made using a shared bicycle.

ITN-4d. Seek funding to refine and implement the City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan. The City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan includes a comprehensive collection of recommendations for improving cycling throughout the community including connections to and through Center City. The City should update the plan regularly and continue to seek local, state and federal funding to implement the plan recommendations.



End-of-trip facilities, with parking, lockers and showers, are vital to making the area a true City of Bikes.



A flexible, easy-to-use bike share system should be installed in Uptown and then extended out to surrounding neighborhoods.

integrated transportation network recommendations

ITN-5. Strengthen the Unified Parking System and Program

Automobile parking will continue to be a valuable resource in Center City that requires deliberate management and creative solutions. A unified parking system will require a high level of design, coordination and management.

ITN-5a. Continue to develop a balanced and shared parking system to optimize use of resources and reduce overall parking demand. New parking supply should be carefully implemented. Consideration should be given to where the greatest demand will exist, where there is a predicted deficit of supply, and how the parking

strategy can complement other Transportation Demand Management initiatives. A shared-use approach to parking should be embraced to allow for the efficient use of this valued asset. The creation of a shared-use model would empower planners with sufficient data to make informed decisions about the location, amount and policies that would manage Center City parking resources on typical weekdays as well as for weekends and special events.

ITN-5b. When designing new parking, ensure that it is pedestrian-friendly, context-sensitive and adds to the urban fabric of Center City. Special attention to parking design must be paid to facilities located on high-value streets and blocks where heavy pedestrian movements are most prevalent. Parking facilities in these locations should be integrated as a part of buildings and maintain an active façade with occupied space and integrated building architecture. Regardless of location, all parking should be designed to be safe and attractive, and it should include interesting details that make a positive contribution to the experience of Center City. New parking facilities should also incorporate green building design practices whenever possible.

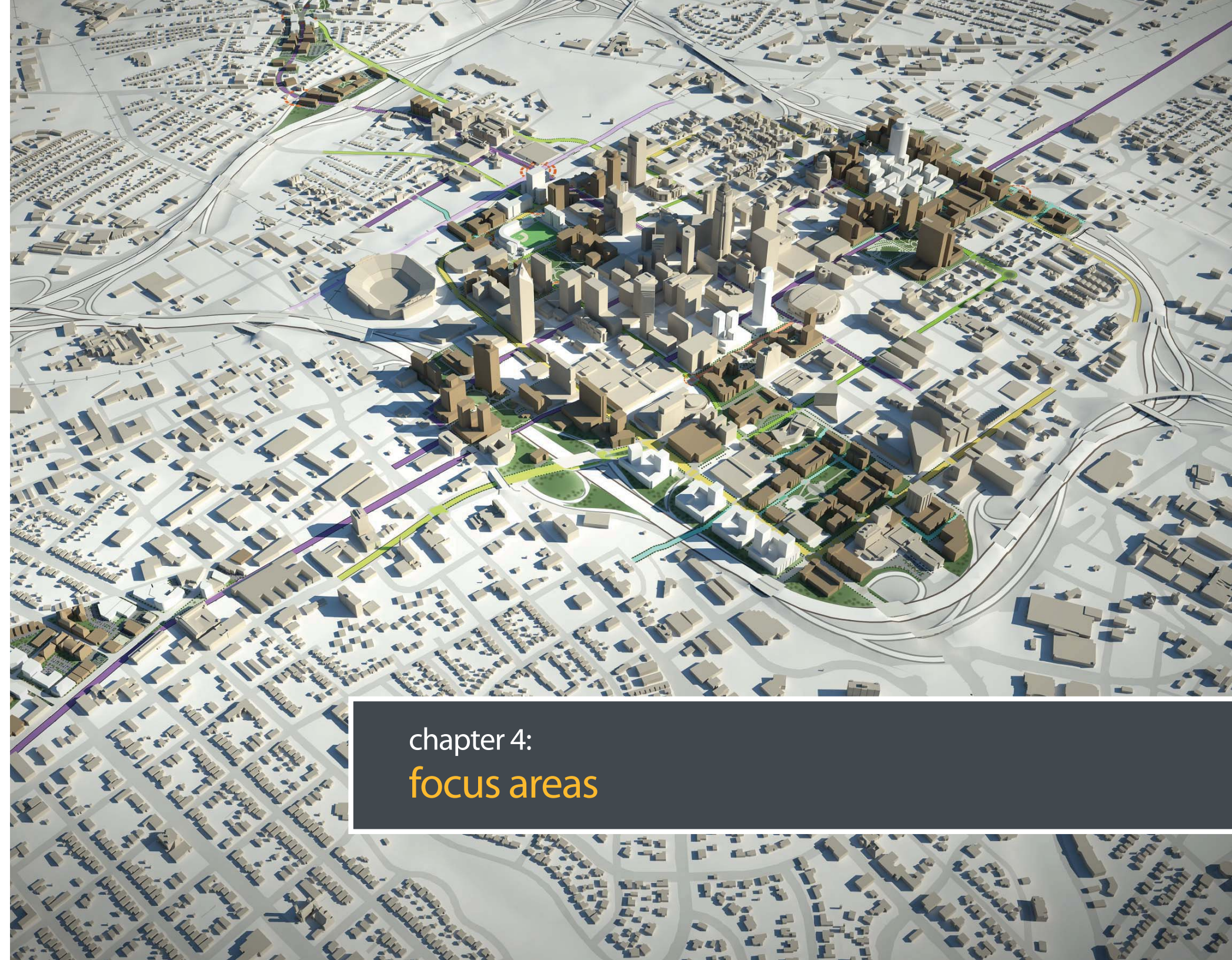
ITN-5c. Increase on-street parking supply where appropriate and based on curb use recommendations in the City's Curb Lane Management Study. On-street parking supply should be increased where appropriate and based on curb use recommendations in the City's Curb

Lane Management Study. Increasing on-street parking supply would assist both with calming traffic and with increasing the supply of short-term parking that supports retail. The addition of on-street parking should be strategic and implemented in accordance with curb use recommendations from the Curb Lane Management Study. On some lower-volume streets that have higher traffic demands during peak times, options should be explored that allow partial closure to motor vehicles during off-peak periods.

ITN-5d. Apply new technology and other progressive parking programs. New approaches to parking should continue to be explored, including those that integrate technological components such as smart phone applications, dynamic signage showing available spaces, and other new parking structure technology and infrastructure. Car sharing and electric vehicle parking with charging stations should be installed to accommodate the evolving technology and changing use of the automobile. Finally, the provision for credit card-enabled, multi-space meters should continue as the City converts parking meters to pay stations for on-street parking throughout Uptown.



Real-time information and wayfinding should be a part of the unified parking system and program.



chapter 4:
focus areas

chapter 4: focus areas

Implementing the Transformative Strategies and moving the vision toward reality will be achieved in part through the physical development and enhancement of specific “Focus Areas” in Center City. Strategic, well-designed projects in key locations will dramatically transform these places and, in turn, catalyze further investment in surrounding areas.

Six major Focus Areas are identified in this section. They were selected based on criteria ranging from their capacity to stimulate short-term development to their ability to foster long-term partnering opportunities that will benefit a range of public and private entities.

Focus Area strategies consider land uses, infrastructure, adjacent development patterns and programmatic contexts. They also outline important connections and linkages, key development and improvement opportunities, and specific catalyst projects. Importantly, while concentrating on areas with assets to further leverage, they span several different geographies of Center City to ensure a broad distribution of resources, capital and energy.

Criteria for Selection

Several criteria were used to evaluate the potential for each Focus Area, as well as to analyze and prioritize project opportunities within each. In summary, the Focus Areas must:

- **Have the potential for short-term development/implementation.** To generate and maintain as much momentum as possible, Focus Areas and the projects they support should be evaluated on their ability to be realized within a short time frame. This concept of determining “quick wins” will help provide a series of projects that can be more readily implemented.
- **Create synergy with public improvements.** Sites and projects should build on and coordinate with public improvements whether on-site or immediately adjacent. Investments in the public realm and open spaces are especially synergistic in their ability to support a new catalyst project, and vice-versa.
- **Support many Transformative Strategies.** Focus Areas should be carefully analyzed and chosen based on their ability to implement and effectuate as many of the Transformative Strategies as possible.
- **Provide key connections to adjacent areas.** To support creating linkages within and between Center City neighborhoods, Focus Areas and catalyst projects should be evaluated on their ability to fill

in a critical gap or make a foray into an otherwise underdeveloped portion of Center City that physically separates neighborhoods.

- **Capitalize on recent/planned investments.** Similar to supporting public improvements, Focus Areas should capitalize and build on the energy created by existing recent or successful development projects or destinations. For example, a catalyst project in a Focus Area may build on the success of a nearby residential development, and could add the critical mass necessary for retail to be successful.
- **Demonstrate a “win” for both the public and private sectors.** Focus Areas should foster projects and improvements that are financially feasible and aim to provide positive returns for investors, be they public or private, to ensure successful long-term investments.

Utilizing these criteria, six Focus Areas are identified to spur strategic, catalytic development opportunities. The 2020 Vision Plan Focus Areas are:

- Stonewall/I-277.
- Ballpark Neighborhood.
- North Tryon.
- Charlotte Transportation Center.
- West Trade Corridor.
- South End.

Overarching Design Principles

Each Focus Area's unique location, character, assets and opportunities will shape its particular development trajectory and physical transformation over time.

However, there are several shared design principles that should be applied to all Focus Areas to help achieve the 2020 Vision. These principles relate to the guidelines outlined in the Placemaking and Urban Design Transformative Strategy and include:

- Iconic Architecture.** Build iconic architecture that enlivens the urban fabric, celebrates Charlotte as a 21st century city, identifies and “brands” the Focus Area, adds to the overall identity of Center City, and complements the broader context of surrounding neighborhoods.
- Gateways to Center City.** Establish gateways—including artwork, signage and other sculptural elements—at the transition points between Focus Areas and existing development to distinguish Center City's identity within greater Charlotte.
- Density.** Ensure that the overall density of Focus Area development is high to create the population and urban form that can support neighborhood services and activate surrounding streets and commercial areas. New development should “step down” to respect existing neighborhood character, meet the scale of adjacent residential areas, and maximize access to sunlight and views.
- Flexible Ground-Floor Space.** Build flexible ground-floor spaces to allow active retail, restaurant and entertainment uses to move into Center City over time and as market demand grows.
- Active Ground-Floor Uses.** Encourage active work and living spaces on ground floors not designed for retail, restaurants and entertainment uses. Do not permit construction of large building frontages filled with office or residential lobby space uses or blank parking deck walls.
- Streetscape Improvements.** Prioritize streetscape improvements along the edges of redevelopment Focus Area catalyst project sites and streets linking major destinations to existing and future transit stops. Consider establishing minimum setbacks and optional recess distances from curbs to primary building façades to create environments supportive of pedestrians.
- Parking Design.** Encourage integration of parking into new development, wrapped parking structures with active ground-floor uses, and shared parking solutions, especially in higher-density areas. Any surface parking lots should be highly landscaped and located between or behind buildings to prevent fragmentation of the urban fabric. Entrances to parking structures or lots should not be located along pedestrian-oriented streets.



New, bold, iconic architecture will help identify and brand not only each Focus Area but all of Center City.



Each Focus Area must help to improve and connect the pedestrian streetscape environment.



focus areas

The six areas span a range of geographies in Center City and are linked by the larger framework of transit, pedestrian, bicycle and roadway connections. Each Focus Area section on the following pages includes an overview of the location, vision and overall approach to the area; a summary of opportunities and challenges; a diagram that illustrates key physical relationships and opportunities; highlights of specific development and improvement opportunities; and a description of catalyst projects that will anchor the area and help stimulate investment.

stonewall/I-277

Situated along recently reclaimed land at a prominent gateway to Uptown, the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area bridges the gap between the core of Uptown and South End. This Focus Area holds great potential to take advantage of its many nearby attractions and flourish as a walkable destination and employment center.

While some development is already underway, in coming years the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area will see dramatic change in the form of new and expanded hospitality destinations, a new Amateur Sports Cluster, a new mixed-use neighborhood, a freeway cap, and other linkages that further connect Uptown with South End. The area will feature a range of urban uses including offices, hospitality, housing, recreation venues, education facilities, parks and shops. Office workers, conference attendees, visitors, students, athletes, families and more will activate the streets and make Stonewall/I-277 an exciting corridor and principal entry into Uptown.

With a foundation of significant redevelopment energy already in place along South Tryon Street and in South End, the strategy focuses on the area generally bounded by Stonewall, Brevard and 3rd streets on the north, Little Sugar Creek Greenway on the east, I-277 and Morehead Street on the south, and Tryon and Church streets on the west. Several projects that contribute to economic development include the Charlotte Convention Center expansion, NASCAR Hall of Fame, Westin Hotel and the Levine Center for the Arts. The Focus Area approach builds upon existing assets and future plans—including nearby hospitality-oriented facilities, the burgeoning

South End, land uses and design guidelines of the Second Ward Village Plan, the Brevard Street Plan, and future development opportunities along Stonewall—to further establish and enhance direction for the area.

Opportunities and Challenges

In the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area, there are **opportunities** to:

- Implement the overland greenway trail connector along Stonewall Street from Little Sugar Creek to the Tryon Street bridge and ultimately to the Irwin Creek Greenway.
- Leverage the existing hospitality cluster anchored by the Convention Center and NASCAR Hall of Fame to attract new business, visitors and residents.
- Expand the City's Convention Center business.
- Implement plans for Brevard Street to create a stroll district and entertainment destination that will increase demand for hotels, restaurants and other hospitality services as the neighborhood grows.
- Identify strategic investments proximal to existing recreation venues that will enrich the user experience and attract a wider range of visitors.
- Stimulate redevelopment of Second Ward by utilizing publicly-controlled properties south of Stonewall Street and along I-277. Sufficient land is available for short- and mid-term development without construction of a freeway cap.
- Implement the Second Ward Neighborhood Master Plan to jumpstart many of these opportunities.

Potential **challenges** in the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area include:

- I-277 is a barrier between Uptown, South End and surrounding neighborhoods.
- Few neighborhood amenities currently exist to attract residents to Second Ward; restaurants, entertainment and retail will be slow in coming to the area without adequate local market demand.
- Many existing buildings feature service entrances, loading docks, inactive spaces and secondary entrances that discourage pedestrian activity.
- Most of the developable land that has and will be created from freeway ramp reconfiguration will still be bounded by I-277 and one or more major roadways.



The Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area includes publicly-owned parcels adjacent to the freeway interchange.



stonewall/i-277 recommendations

Recommendations

The full build out of Stonewall/I-277 will take many years to complete. There are several key recommendations that will help ensure the area's success as a prominent gateway and major mixed-use and hospitality-oriented destination. These include creating strong **connections and linkages**, capturing key **development opportunities**, and developing a specific **catalyst project**.

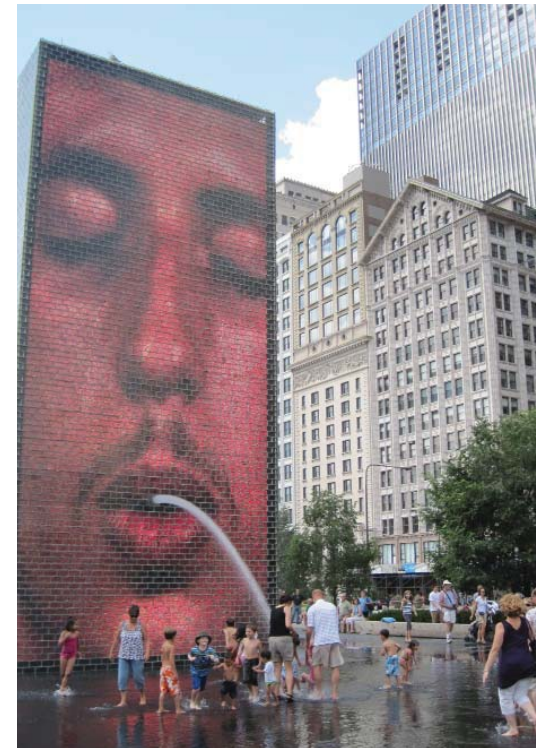
CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Redevelopment of the Stonewall/I-277 area provides an opportunity to restore the street grid and improve connections between several parts of Center City.

Specific recommendations include:

- a Construct a Cap over the I-277 Freeway.** A cap over the loop should be constructed in phases and eventually stretch between Church Street and the LYNX Blue Line light rail. This strategy—introduced in the 2010 Vision Plan and built upon here—would help break down the barrier of the loop, create taxable property, and encourage infill development in Uptown and South End. The cap should include a large civic space framed by new private development. This space could also support additional civic and cultural spaces near Tryon Street and should create a gateway to Center City and Uptown. Iconic architecture, public art and the infrastructure itself should highlight the importance of Uptown and this vibrant mixed-use area.

- b Redesign Stonewall Street to Become the Southern Section of the Boulevard Loop.** Stonewall Street would be a main connection between Second and Third wards. It should be a lush, beautiful roadway for autos as well as recreational walking, strolling and cycling, similar to Queens Road in Myers Park. McDowell Street should be developed as the eastern section of the Boulevard Loop to connect uses along Stonewall to the Second Ward/Brooklyn Village, Government Center and First Ward while providing convenient access to Trade Street and Midtown (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail).
- c Create a Wide Pedestrian Promenade along Stonewall Street.** As outlined in the Second Ward Neighborhood Master Plan, the street should transition from a primarily auto-oriented street to a vehicular and pedestrian connector. Streetscape improvements within the greenway trail overland connector, including a wide pedestrian sidewalk along Stonewall Street's south edge, should enhance walkability and facilitate interaction with adjacent buildings.



The cap park over the I-277 freeway should be bold and exciting with public art, kiosks and programming, such as Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois.

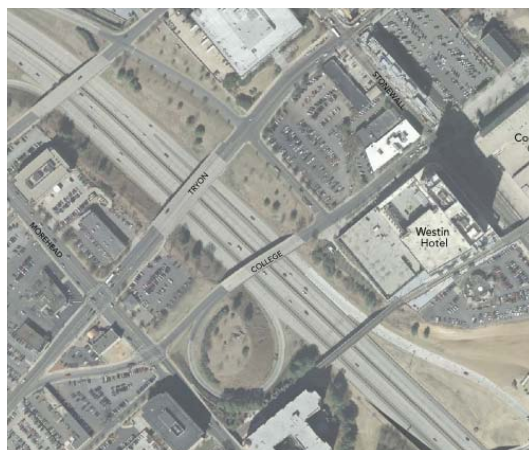
stonewall/I-277 recommendations



The Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area should link closely with the Second Ward Neighborhood Master Plan, which proposes stronger connectivity through reintroduction of portions of the street grid.

- d Support the Ward Loop.** Unique materials, landscaping and stormwater management should be integrated on MLK to link the Second Ward Village, Levine Center for the Arts and Romare Bearden Park (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail).
- e Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections.** Strong bicycle and pedestrian connections should be made throughout the Focus Area, with links to public transit, the Little Sugar Creek Greenway and Pearl Street Park. The rail trail along the LYNX Blue Line light rail should be extended across I-277 as part of the freeway cap and developed as a distinctive linear park with public art and amenities. Planned upgrades to the South Tryon Street Bridge over I-277 will include removal of one lane of traffic, new bike lanes, wider sidewalks and improved lighting. The urban feel and character of Tryon Street should be extended south from Stonewall Street to Morehead Street.
- f Restore the Street Grid.** As described in the Second Ward Neighborhood Master Plan, the area's street grid should be reintroduced through new roads and development to create shorter, more walkable blocks.

stonewall/I-277 recommendations



Existing I-277 freeway.

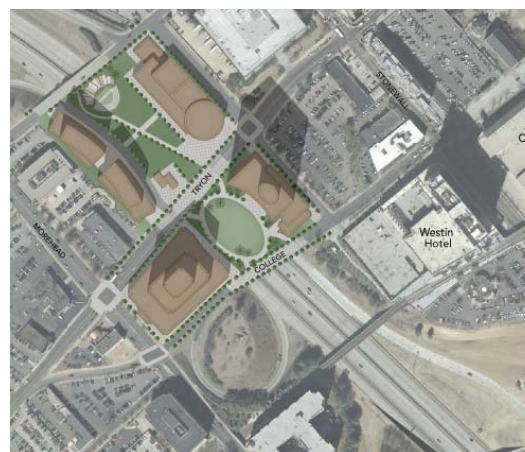
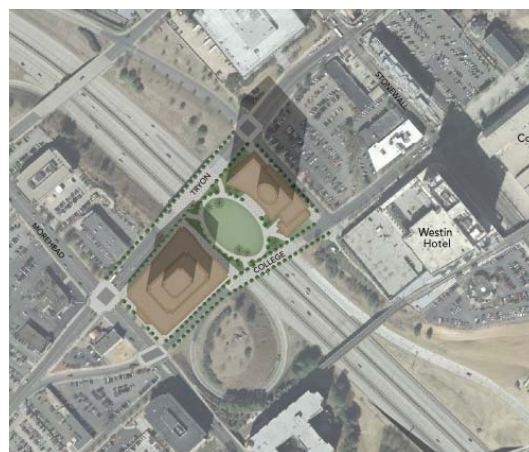
DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area will have an eclectic yet cohesive mix of uses. New land made available for redevelopment through the reconfiguration of several freeway ramps has converted public land into a tax revenue-generating asset. The freeway cap should extend the mix of offices and cultural destinations along Tryon Street, while providing a large civic park space and stronger links between Uptown and South End. Stonewall Street should be home to convention facilities, hotels, offices, amateur sports and recreation facilities, as well as an educational campus shared by the Metro School and a future Second Ward High School, when needed. The Second Ward/Brooklyn Village mixed-use neighborhood should include a range of housing options, shops and services.

Specific recommendations include:

1 Bridge the Freeway with Phased Development.

Development of the freeway cap should be phased to ensure that the final circulation patterns and open space, parks and recreational framework support private development needs and provide good connectivity. Targeted uses should include cultural facilities, mixed-use office towers, a large civic park and expansion of Convention Center facilities. A civic space could include elements such as a band shell or amphitheater. Buildings should have attractive façades on the south side of Stonewall Street as well as on the rear side facing the freeway loop. Development on the south side of Stonewall should help fund creation of a wide landscaped pedestrian promenade.



A phased approach to capping the freeway—beginning with a deck between Tryon and College streets and eventually extending north to Church Street and south to the rail line—could be employed to link to South End while reducing initial development costs.

stonewall/i-277 recommendations



The Charlotte Convention Center should be expanded in ways that augment the facilities while creating attractive, walkable ground-floor environments.



New hospitality uses could include boutique hotels to support area destinations and development of the Amateur Sports Cluster.

- 2 Expand and Enhance the Charlotte Convention Center.** Ground-floor façades of the Convention Center should be retrofitted to create more active and inviting streetscapes. Retail, restaurant and meeting spaces on primary street edges should be encouraged. Depending upon development opportunities at the freeway cap, the Convention Center could be expanded south of Stonewall Street and/or east of Caldwell Street. The sidewalk along the College Street side of the facility should be enhanced with a warmer paving pattern, landscaping, and upgraded lighting to make it more inviting for conference attendees and to complement The Green. Similar treatment should occur between the 3rd Street LYNX Blue Line light rail station and the MLK entrance to the Convention Center. All improvements should respect the needs of the facility to maintain access and visibility for its many events.
- 3 Create New Residential Opportunities.** Mixed-use residential development should be developed north of MLK between First Baptist Church and McDowell Street as part of the Second Ward/Brooklyn Village plan. Residential development along MLK south of Second Ward Park should step down to maximize solar access at the park. Additional high-density mixed-use development should be concentrated around the freeway cap and along the south edge of Stonewall Street.
- 4 Create New Retail Opportunities.** Areas adjacent to the new Second Ward Park and along Stonewall Street should become attractive, marketable areas for new retail and dining activities.
- 5 Cultivate the Amateur Sports Cluster.** A new or renovated Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center should be a key anchor of this economic development strategy. Additional new facilities should be located at Pearl Street Park and Baxter Street Park, as well as other locations throughout Center City. Connections to the Grady Cole Center and American Legion Memorial Stadium should be enhanced for all transportation modes. Opportunities for shared recreation space with a future Second Ward High School, when needed, and in the Second Ward/Brooklyn Village development should also be explored (see Network of Parks, Open Space and Recreation section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail).
- 6 Develop New Educational Facilities.** The potential should be explored for the Metro School and future new Second Ward High School, when new schools are needed, to share recreational facilities and parking. The high school should be developed at a relatively high density as part of a new academic and recreation campus. Opportunities should also be explored for adding office and retail uses to help strengthen the links between the schools and the business community.
- 7 Expand the Number of Hospitality Destinations.** Lodging, restaurants and other hospitality destinations should be targeted along Stonewall Street to support the Convention Center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and Amateur Sports Cluster.

stonewall/I-277 recommendations

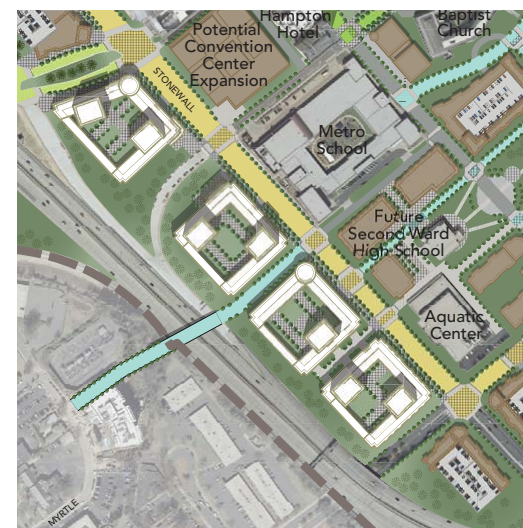
CATALYST PROJECT

Redevelopment of the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area will entail a combination of strategic public improvements and private investments over several years. Streetscape enhancements along Stonewall Street and MLK will help to set the stage for revitalization. However, development of **the public land south of Stonewall** will have the most significant impact on defining the area's character and catalyzing development on adjacent properties. Property with the greatest development potential extends from the LYNX Blue Line light rail to beyond McDowell Street between Stonewall and I-277. Market studies can help identify the optimal mix, size and variety of uses. Redevelopment of this site can bring benefits such as an increased tax base, jobs and economic diversity and spark public sector interest in further investment.

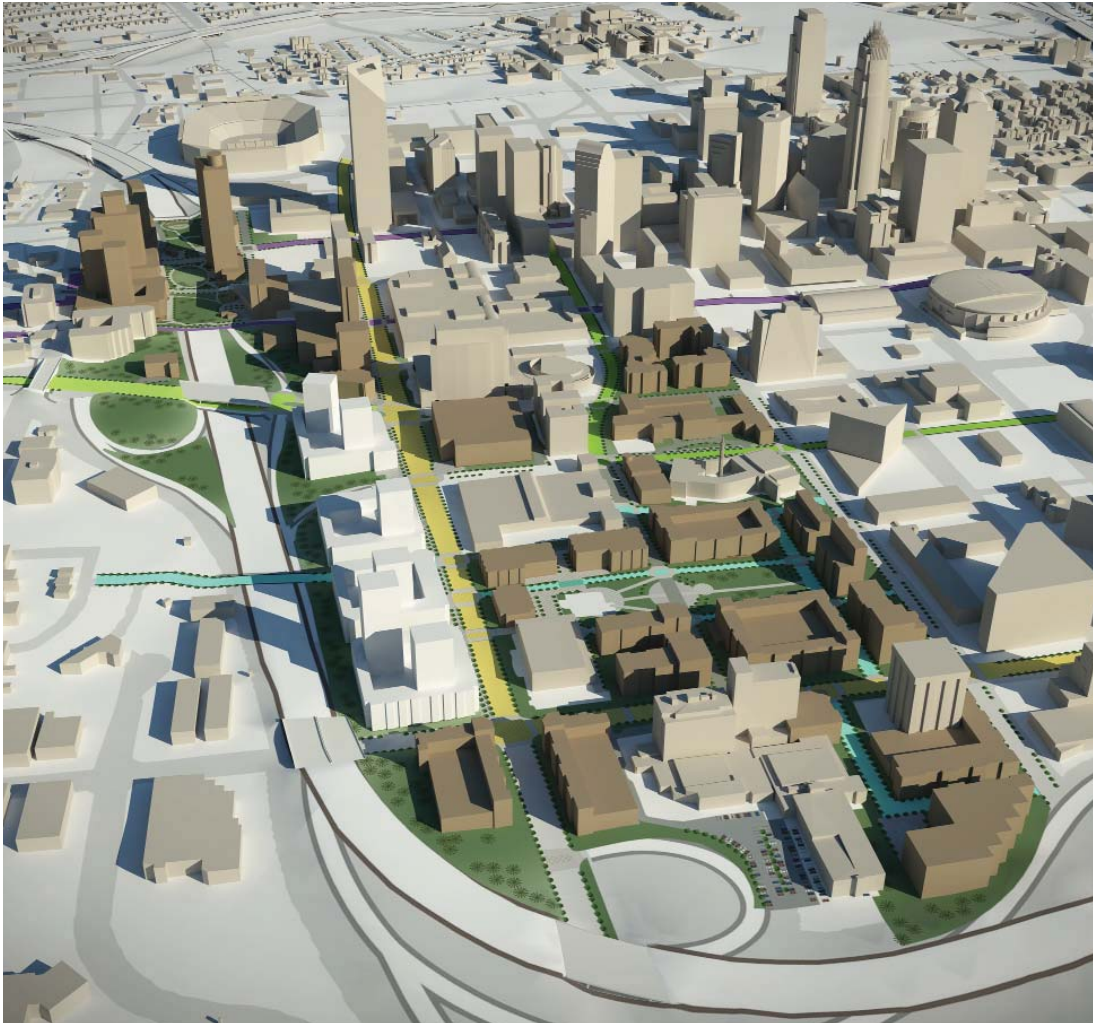
Several key elements and design considerations are important to ensure the appropriate development of the site:

- Recommended uses for the public land south of Stonewall Street include hotels, offices, residential, educational facilities and/or recreational facilities with retail and restaurants along the ground floor.
- Lodging should be concentrated on the western end of the development to serve existing visitor destinations.

- Education and recreational facilities should be located adjacent to one another to maximize synergy and potential for shared facilities.
- Service access and parking solutions should be shared between buildings.
- Buildings should be set back from Stonewall Street and oriented to the street to create an attractive pedestrian promenade.
- Service functions for buildings on the south side of Stonewall Street should be accommodated on the east, west or south sides of buildings whenever feasible via service roads that can double as pedestrian pathways.
- The south façade of buildings should be designed to provide a dramatic and aesthetically pleasing edge to Uptown as viewed from the freeway loop and neighborhoods. Iconic architecture should contribute to a prominent Uptown gateway.
- Buildings along Stonewall Street taller than five stories should step back at this height to ensure a pedestrian-friendly scale and allow for sunlight and view access.
- Buildings with stepbacks should create opportunities for rooftop restaurants, gardens, balconies and galleries.



stonewall/i-277 recommendations



The Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area is centered around development parcels adjacent to the freeway, which should be developed with a mix of high-intensity uses that create a wide pedestrian promenade and frame the corridor across from several major facilities.



A generous pedestrian promenade, with setbacks large enough to accommodate landscaping, lighting, art and sculptural features, should be developed along the south edge of Stonewall Street as part of the overland greenway trail connector.

ballpark neighborhood

The Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area in Third Ward will be a place like no other in Charlotte. This vibrant neighborhood will bring together a new AAA baseball park with nearby existing sports facilities; new sport-related retail shops, restaurants and bars; fun and active park spaces; and a transit station that is on par with the finest facilities in the country.

Historically, baseball stadiums were integrated into the urban fabric and were the centerpiece of walkable neighborhoods. However, ballparks developed over the last 50 years were usually built on the edge of cities to ensure an abundant supply of parking and inexpensive land. Recent demographic and economic trends have heralded a return of these busy, affordable, family-friendly facilities to the urban core.

Building on the anticipated construction of Knights Stadium, Romare Bearden Park and the Charlotte Gateway Station—and capitalizing on synergies with Bank of America Stadium—the Ballpark Neighborhood strategy focuses on creating a round-the-clock, activity-oriented place. The area will include high-density residential units for people who want to live near the energy of the ballpark. It will be a new employment center with mixed-use office and commercial development located around the stadiums and the future multi-modal transit station.

The Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area is generally bounded by Trade Street on the north, the railroad on the west, Church Street on the east, and Stonewall Street on the south. It builds upon design principles established in the Third Ward Neighborhood Village Plan and establishes further direction for key public improvements and public and private development in the area.

Opportunities and Challenges

In the Ballpark Neighborhood, there are **opportunities** to:

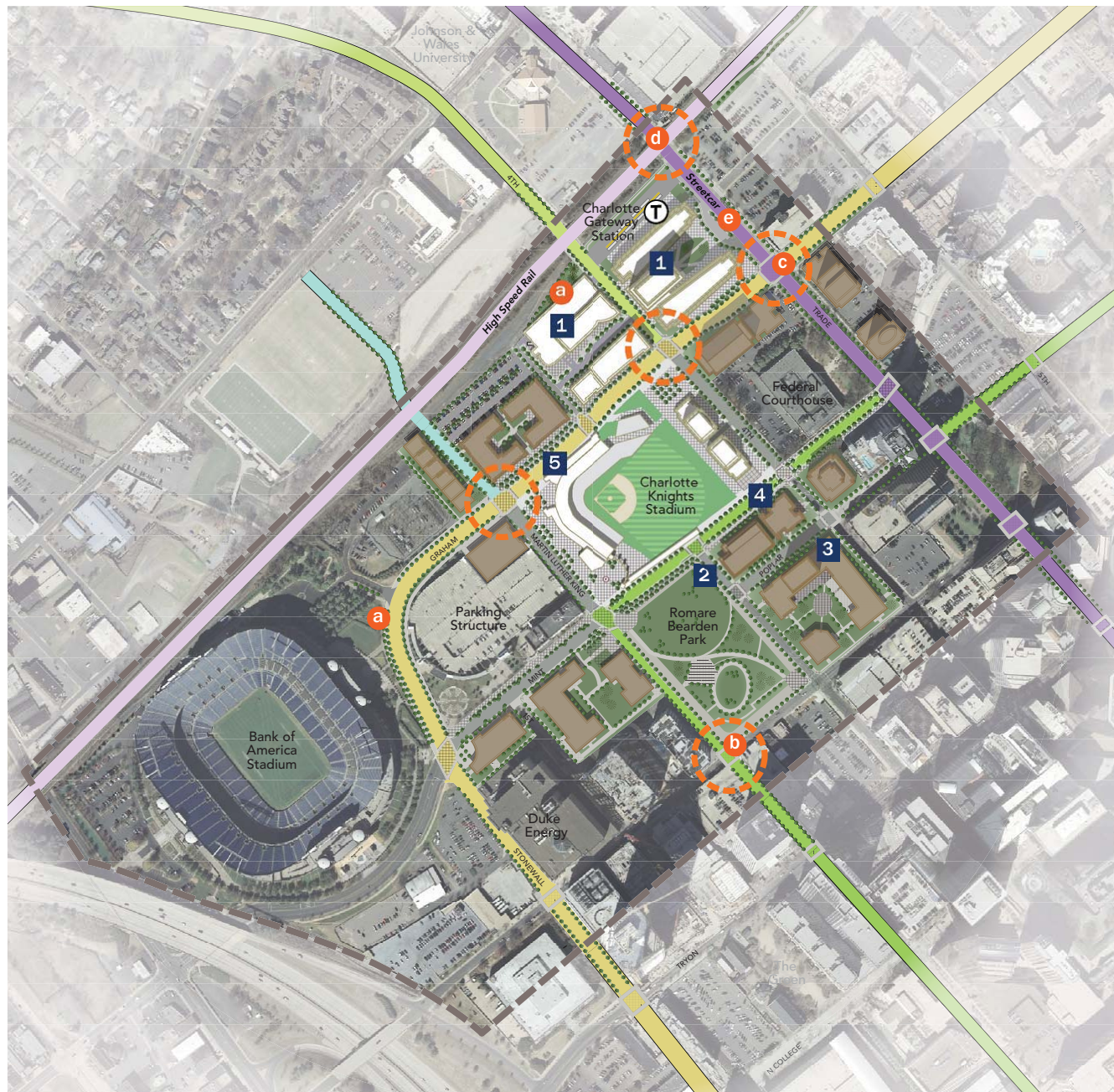
- Support and build upon the plan for a new minor league ballpark near the center of Third Ward.
- Utilize the abundance of surface parking lots and vacant land around the future Knights Stadium site—much of which is under public control—to influence the development, form and character of the neighborhood.
- Realign and redesign key streets to improve connectivity to and within Third Ward.
- Capitalize on plans for the streetcar on Trade Street, as well as regional rail and bus transit, all intersecting at a new Gateway Station to bring in activity, economic development and new projects.
- Explore the opportunity to provide enhanced bicycle facilities specific to this area, possibly including cycletracks.

Potential **challenges** in the Ballpark Neighborhood include:

- The railroad is a major barrier separating the west and east portions of Third Ward; 4th and Trade streets provide the only connections across the railroad within the area.
- The barrier effect of the railroad tracks is further compounded by Graham Street, which is a state highway and is largely oriented toward auto through-traffic.
- Bank of America Stadium attracts large crowds to the area, but only for a handful of games and events each year.
- There is currently insufficient market demand for restaurants, entertainment and retail in the district.



The Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area includes vacant land and several parking lots in the heart of Third Ward.



ballpark neighborhood illustrative concept

The concept illustrates key recommendations related to connections, development opportunities and catalyst projects, which are highlighted on the following pages.

- Focus Area Boundary
- Connection/Linkage
- Development Opportunity
- Catalyst Project
- New Development
- Regional Transit Connection
- Local Transit Connection
- Ward Loop Connection
- Boulevard Loop Connection
- Neighborhood Connection
- New Street Connection
- Gateway
- Plaza/Promenade
- Transit Facility
- Freeway/Ramp
- Rail



KEY MAP

0 50 150 300 feet



ballpark neighborhood recommendations

Recommendations

Creating a Ballpark Neighborhood in Third Ward will be an incremental process, beginning with the development of Romare Bearden Park and the new stadium, and then over time incorporating new private projects and the Gateway Station. There are several key recommendations that will help ensure the Focus Area's success. These include creating strong **connections and linkages**, capturing key **development opportunities**, and developing a specific **catalyst project**.

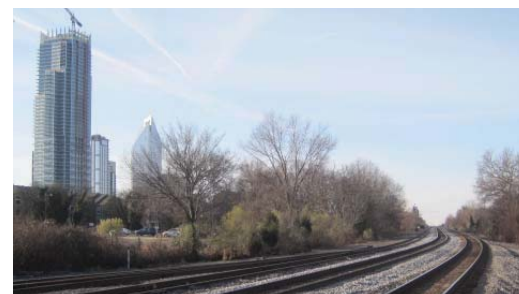
CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Providing strong physical linkages between and to the Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area's major facilities will be critical to optimizing the economic benefits of these significant investments. Cosmopolitan, clearly-defined streetscapes should draw in tourists and conventioners from Tryon Street, the Convention Center and hotels to experience the park and stadium areas. Ground-floor spaces should have active uses such as shops, cafés, restaurants and bars.

Specific recommendations include:

- a Integrate the Boulevard Loop.** Graham and Stonewall streets should be redesigned to become the western and southern sections of the Boulevard Loop in Uptown (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail). These streets would be the main link between the football and baseball stadiums and Gateway Station.
- b Support the Ward Loop.** Green street and recreation concepts for landscaping and stormwater management should be integrated along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (MLK) and Mint and Poplar streets to link Romare Bearden Park and the Ballpark Neighborhood to Trade and Tryon streets, neighboring destination districts, and other Uptown parks.
- c Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections.** Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections should be created at the Trade Street streetcar station and to the Charlotte Gateway Station along MLK and 3rd, 4th, Graham, Mint, Poplar and Church streets.
- d Overcome the Barrier of the Railroad Tracks.** The railroad tracks are a barrier to West Trade Street and the larger West End area. As a prominent east-west link through the area, MLK is an important potential connection to the Third Ward neighborhood west of the railroad tracks. This street should be extended as recommended in the Center City Transportation Plan, linking the neighborhood directly to the center of the ballpark district.

- e Leverage Transit Links.** The streetcar and a signature pedestrian environment should be developed along Trade Street with a highly-designed streetscape, plazas and ground-floor activation. These improvements should be prioritized and focused in the Focus Area at the Gateway Station and the intersection of Poplar and Trade streets.
- f Reinforce the 'Stadium in the Park.'** Since 1996, thousands of fans who may not have otherwise visited Uptown have enjoyed the urban experience through attending NFL Carolina Panthers games at Bank of America Stadium. In addition to providing renewed interest in Center City among fans, the franchise has also contributed significant economic impact and brought national recognition to the city. The stadium has had a positive visual impact on Third Ward as the trees and vegetation surrounding the building have grown and flourished into a lush, park-like setting. Expanding this green space and linking it to existing parks and greenways should be explored.



The railroad tracks extending from Fourth Ward south through the Ballpark Neighborhood are a major barrier that must be overcome with strong east-west connections.

ballpark neighborhood recommendations

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to smaller-scale retail shops, restaurants, cafés and bars in the neighborhood, Knights Stadium's southeast plaza and other ballpark entry points should include sports-related attractions (e.g. the team store, a hall of fame) that will activate the space year-round. Condos, apartments and offices located above the shops and restaurants will be important economic

catalysts that benefit from proximity to Romare Bearden Park and the ballpark. As part of the future major employment center, office development that extends the current concentration from Tryon Street along Trade Street will be important to establishing a strong daytime population.

Specific recommendations include:

- 1 Create a New Employment Center.** Mixed-use office development should be concentrated near Trade Street and the Gateway Station to take full advantage of existing office concentrations and future transit opportunities. Parcels located adjacent to and across from Gateway Station should be developed as office. The rear parking lot of the Federal Courthouse, to be redeveloped by Queens University, could potentially be redeveloped as an office building surrounding a parking deck.
- 2 Cultivate a Unique Neighborhood Character.** To ensure that the area's character is authentic to Charlotte, the focus of future development should revolve around supporting the neighborhood as a place to live and work. For example, new shops, services and restaurants should cater to residents and workers, so that the retail theme isn't solely sports- and visitor-related. Tourists and fans would also enjoy this organic neighborhood character.
- 3 Develop New Residential Opportunities.** Mixed-use residential projects should be developed along Graham, Mint and 4th streets; MLK; and around Romare Bearden Park. These developments would make use of the sector's high-density potential. Appropriate building height recommendations for new development adjacent to the Knights Stadium should be established to maintain access to sunlight and views of the Uptown core.
- 4 Support New Retail Opportunities.** Flexible ground-floor spaces adjacent to Romare Bearden Park and Knights Stadium should be built in a way that allows for shops, restaurants and entertainment venues to move into the neighborhood over time and as market demand grows. These uses could "spill" out onto the streets around Romare Bearden Park and contribute to a lively, well-utilized park environment.
- 5 Ensure an Attractive Ballpark Façade Design.** The elevations of the new ballpark should be designed to add architectural interest to the neighborhood. Necessary ballpark service areas should have a positive aesthetic impact on the streetscape so that pedestrians feel comfortable walking around all sides of the stadium, especially along Graham and Mint streets. The Mint Street stadium façade will significantly shape the user experience in Romare Bearden Park.



With the ballpark as a catalyst, the neighborhood could thrive as a destination for residents and tourists, like PGE Park in Portland, Oregon.

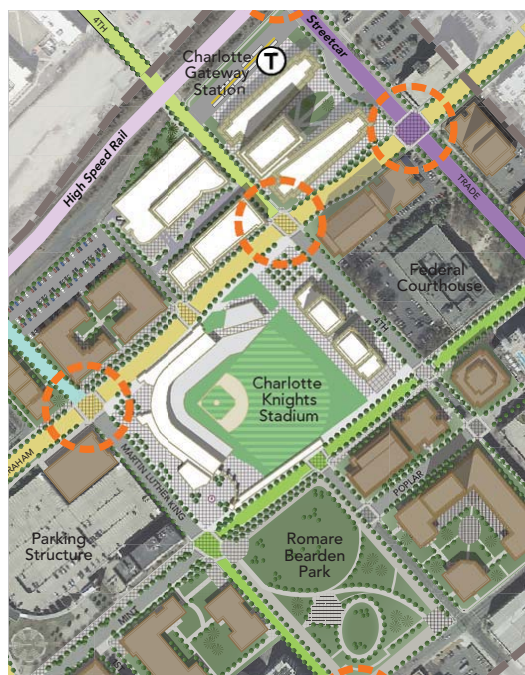
ballpark neighborhood recommendations

CATALYST PROJECTS

Construction of Romare Bearden Park and streetscape improvements will set the stage for revitalization in the Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area, but two key development projects—Knights Stadium and the Charlotte Gateway Station—will be key to catalyzing additional development and achieving the vision for the area.

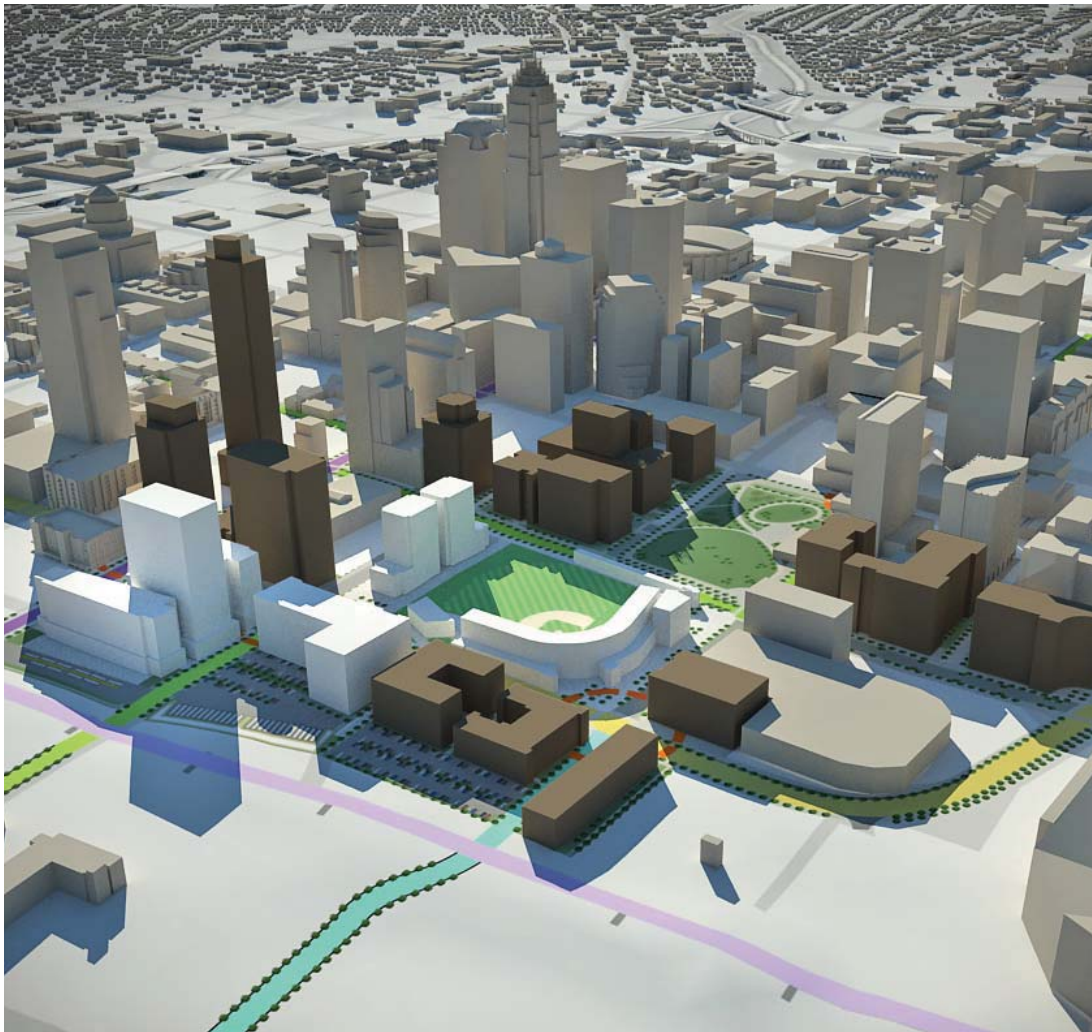
The new **Knights Stadium** is planned for approximately eight acres bounded by Graham, Mint and 4th streets and MLK. Several key elements and design considerations are important to leveraging this large investment at the heart of the neighborhood:

- The stadium should be programmed with baseball games as well as a variety of other events to activate the area on non-game days throughout the year.
- The stadium development should include a variety of retail and restaurant spaces that can be open to the public on non-event days.
- The stadium should have multiple public entrances, with major entries oriented to the following intersections: Graham Street/MLK, Graham/4th streets and Mint Street/MLK.



Restaurant and bar activity around the stadium should occur both on game days and throughout the year.

ballpark neighborhood recommendations



Ballpark Neighborhood Focus Area development should link together the sports facilities and Romare Bearden Park; connect west to the rest of Third Ward and north and east to the Tryon Street Uptown core; leverage the Charlotte Gateway Station; and fill in gaps with mixed-use residential and retail to create a true neighborhood experience.

- Stadium services related to loading and operations should be integrated into a new alley between Knights Stadium and new development along 4th Street to accommodate these functions and maximize active uses and visual permeability on the MLK and Graham, Mint and 4th streets frontages.
- The adjacency of Knights Stadium and Romare Bearden Park creates a unique opportunity to build a visually stunning right field wall that celebrates the interface of the two spaces along Mint Street.
- The 4th Street edge should be developed with commercial and/or residential uses as part of the Knights Stadium development. The intersections of Graham/4th streets and Mint Street/MLK should include plaza space, iconic architecture and public art to maximize visibility from the surroundings.
- Ground-floor spaces should be designed to be flexible and accommodate changing uses over time; market demand for retail and restaurants would grow gradually as redevelopment on adjacent properties occurs and the ground-floor edges of the stadium should be designed to maximize this potential over the long-term.

ballpark neighborhood recommendations

The **Charlotte Gateway Station** multi-modal station will be a regional transportation hub with service from Greyhound bus, city buses, Amtrak train, streetcar and high speed rail (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail). Several key elements and design considerations are important when developing the Gateway Station.

- Retail and restaurant uses should be incorporated into both interior and exterior spaces on the ground floor.
- Transit-related and other office uses should be included in the development program on upper floors to maximize on-site intensity and anchor an expanded employment concentration.
- A streetcar line should link along Trade Street directly to the Charlotte Transportation Center.
- With a variety of transit uses converging in one location, the station should be designed to feel like one integrated facility.
- Major entries should be oriented to Trade and Graham streets with special attention paid to the physical and aesthetic connections to the streetcar stops along Trade.
- Strong pedestrian connections should be prioritized along Graham and 4th streets to Knights Stadium and Romare Bearden Park.
- Architecture should be iconic and distinguish the station as the transportation hub for the region.
- Streetscape design and building setbacks should promote the creation of a pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Non-essential uses such as train storage and bus maintenance/cleaning facilities should be located off-site in outlying areas to maximize opportunities for private development adjacent to the station.
- Transit facilities should be oriented along the railroad tracks where feasible to minimize the visual impacts and physical constraints to adjacent development.
- Parking should be integrated into an overall strategy for the Focus Area, with shared underground and/or structured parking developed whenever feasible.
- Taxi and passenger drop-off/pick-up areas should be consolidated to create clear circulation patterns for all transportation modes.
- Underpasses should be activated with artwork, lighting, and uses that enliven the environment and reduce the “tunnel” effect.
- An urban design plan should be undertaken to ensure neighborhood circulation and connections and other urban systems are integrated into overall station design.



The Charlotte Gateway Station should have dramatic architecture befitting of a modern transit hub.

north tryon

The North Tryon Focus Area is poised to experience dramatic change in the coming years. Originally identified in the 2010 Vision Plan and strategically located along the northern part of Center City's premier business corridor, this area has a large amount of redevelopment potential, both within Uptown and along its connection northward to the surrounding neighborhoods.

The North Tryon Focus Area will be a dense mixed-use neighborhood with strong linkages that connect Uptown with North End's newest employment centers. The area will feature a range of urban uses and spaces, including offices, high-tech laboratories, retail, housing, cultural venues, education facilities, parks and retail shops. With this range of uses will come a diverse mix of

people—including researchers, office workers, students, artists and families—that will activate the streets and spaces and make North Tryon one of Center City's most dynamic areas.

Building upon the energy of the dense development and pedestrian-friendly streetscape of Tryon Street, the North Tryon strategy focuses on the area generally bounded by Church Street on the north, 9th Street on the west, Brevard Street on the south, and 12th Street on the east. The strategy leverages existing assets and future plans—including UNC Charlotte's new building, the mixed-use First Ward Village, and future development opportunities at the Hal Marshall site and in North End—while establishing further direction to “stitch together” the elements of this key area.

Opportunities and Challenges

The North Tryon Focus Area provides **opportunities** to:

- Better integrate Center City's neighborhoods and wards with North End, increase the area's role in Charlotte's economic future, and support the overall Applied Innovation Corridor strategy.
- Leverage the planned northern extension of the LYNX Blue Line light rail to facilitate restoration of North End's street grid and greatly improve access and connectivity through the area.
- Implement plans for the First Ward Village project, which is planned to bring a mix of housing types, retail and offices, as well as the First Ward Park.

- Leverage the public asset of the future First Ward Park and new public market to spawn additional private development beyond First Ward Village.
- Develop the County-owned Hal Marshall site with mixed-use development that strategically anchors the area, provides strong links between existing and new projects, and increases connectivity through a new bike- and pedestrian-friendly street segment of 10th Street between Tryon and Brevard streets.
- Build upon and link to the existing North Tryon Area Plan, which calls for a mix of office, industrial, warehouse and distribution uses beginning at the Brookshire Freeway and extending north.

Potential **challenges** in the North Tryon Focus Area include:














- The Brookshire Freeway is a significant barrier to growth, development and connectivity. Physically overcoming this obstacle will be key to revitalization and re-establishment of connectivity between historically fragmented neighborhoods. There is also a significant amount of land within the loop where growth and development can still take place.
- The relocation of many County operations from the Hal Marshall site to outside of Uptown increases the need for one or more anchor tenants to help attract other investors to the area.
- Limited overall market demand for residential and commercial development may require a long development horizon for the area, especially for property north of the Brookshire Freeway.

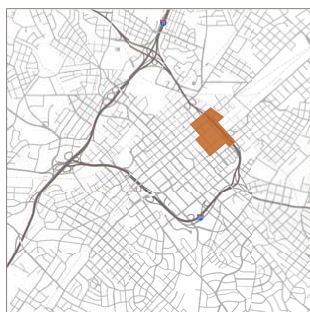


The North Tryon Focus Area abuts I-277 just north of the Uptown office core.

north tryon illustrative concept

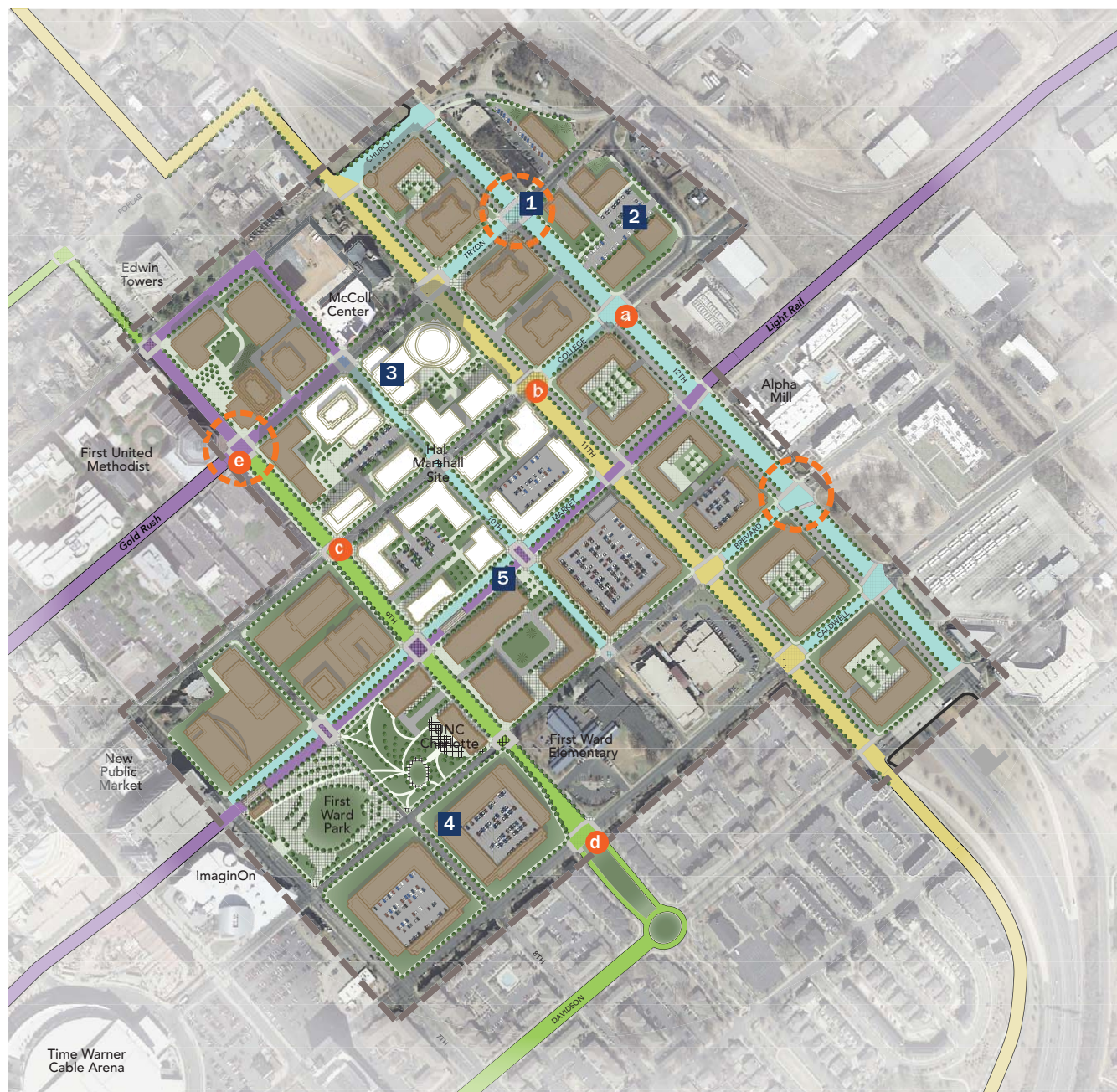
The concept illustrates key recommendations related to connections, development opportunities and catalyst projects, which are highlighted on the following pages.

-  Focus Area Boundary
-  Connection/Linkage
-  Development Opportunity
-  Catalyst Project
-  New Development
-  Local Transit Connection
-  Boulevard Connection
-  Ward Loop Connection
-  New Street Connection
-  Gateway
-  Plaza/Promenade
-  Freeway/Ramp
-  Rail



KEY MAP

0 50 150 300 feet



north tryon recommendations

Recommendations

The optimal design and build out of the North Tryon Focus Area will evolve over time. There are several key recommendations that, if incorporated as part of the final design and implementation, would help ensure North Tryon's success as a dynamic center of employment, education and Center City living. These include creating strong **connections and linkages**, capturing key **development opportunities**, and developing a specific **catalyst project**.



Reconfiguration of the Brookshire Freeway, 11th and 12th streets, and/or the freeway ramps would open up substantial development opportunities.

CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Redevelopment of the North Tryon Focus Area provides an opportunity to restore the street grid and improve connections between several areas of Center City.

Specific recommendations include:

- a Reconfigure the Brookshire Freeway.** Explore opportunities to reconfigure the Brookshire Freeway between Poplar and Caldwell streets. Ideally, the Brookshire Freeway should be enhanced to improve connectivity and densify land uses. Changes should attempt to eliminate the real and perceived barrier between North End and the northern portion of Uptown. Less-extensive improvements for the short-term should be identified as part of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop study to insure the complexity and scale of reconfiguring the freeway do not become a roadblock to redevelopment.
- b Link the Boulevard Loop.** As part of the Brookshire Freeway reconfiguration, 11th and 12th streets should be redesigned to become the northern section of the Boulevard Loop in Uptown (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail).
- c Support the Ward Loop.** Unique materials, landscaping and stormwater management should be integrated on 9th Street to link First Ward Park and Fourth Ward Park to adjacent neighborhoods, Tryon Street and other Uptown parks.
- d Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections.** Strong bicycle and pedestrian connections with safe and inviting pedestrian crossings should be provided throughout the North Tryon area, with an emphasis on links to and from public transit. Plans should be implemented to construct 10th Street from Brevard Street to Tryon Street and improve its quality to Caldwell Street.
- e Enhance Transit Connections.** The LYNX Blue Line light rail should be extended north within the existing rail corridor between College and Brevard streets and a new street along the light rail extension should be constructed to help activate the 9th Street station and surrounding area. Attractive shuttle stops should be provided for the Gold Rush trolley.

north tryon recommendations

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

With much of the North Tryon Focus Area currently characterized by vacant or underutilized land or surface parking lots, development opportunities abound. The blocks along the light rail extension should be home to a mix of educational facilities, housing, retail and smaller office development. Beginning at 9th Street and heading north, North Tryon Street would transition from high-density offices to arts, cultural and educational facilities to light industrial, distribution and offices associated with the Applied Innovation Corridor. Ground floors along Tryon Street should include restaurants and shops to support Center City workers and visitors. First Ward Village should include shops, a new public market, and other services catering to students, residents and workers.

Specific recommendations include:

1 Extend the Tryon Streetscape to Brookshire

Freeway. The concentration of dense offices and residential towers along Tryon Street should be expanded upon with new high-density employment and/or housing near the intersections of North Tryon Street with 9th and 10th streets. Site-appropriate gateway elements —artwork, signage or other sculptural elements—should be built between the Brookshire Freeway and the Boulevard Loop.

2 Bolster the Applied Innovation Corridor.

A strong physical link of development should connect the existing Uptown employment hub concentrated along Tryon Street and support development of the Applied Innovation Corridor. This would entail augmenting the existing light industrial, manufacturing and distribution uses with a mix of new light industrial flex space, research, offices and live-work spaces north of I-277. New buildings should be designed with ornamentation, architectural character and engaging façades fronting the street.

3 Establish New Learning Opportunities.

Additional educational and lifelong learning uses should be recruited to the North Tryon Focus Area to capitalize on access to the LYNX Blue Line light rail and proximity to UNC Charlotte Uptown, Spirit Square, the Levine Museum of the New South, Discovery Place, ImaginOn, North Carolina Dance Theatre and the McColl Center for Visual Art.

4 Create New Residential Opportunities.

Medium- to high-density mixed-use housing should be developed east of College Street to serve nearby employees, students, faculty, staff and artists. Higher-density development along Tryon Street should step down when transitioning to existing residential neighborhoods in First and Fourth wards.

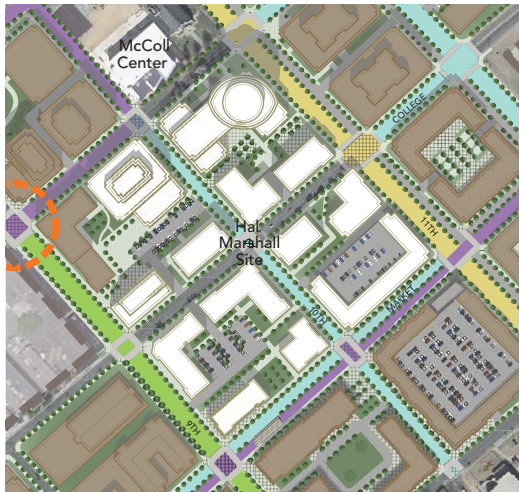
5 Boost Retail and Restaurants.

The public market planned for the Seventh Street Station retail space will anchor a new market district. Ground-floor retail and restaurants should be targeted along the new Market Street along the LYNX Blue Line light rail extension. First Ward Park, the new public market and the UNC Charlotte building should attract expanded destination retail, restaurant and entertainment uses over time. A portion of retail should cater to employees, residents and students working, living and studying in the area every day.



New development in the North Tryon Focus Area should be medium- to high-density to extend the energy of Tryon Street.

north tryon recommendations



CATALYST PROJECT

While a combination of public improvements and private investments is required to transform North Tryon, development of the **Hal Marshall site** would likely have the most significant impact on defining the area's character and catalyzing development on adjacent properties. Site redevelopment should create a distinct identity for the North Tryon area and further ignite private investment in the district.

The Hal Marshall site is generally bounded by 9th, 11th and North Tryon streets and the planned LYNX Blue Line light rail extension (see North Tryon Illustrative Concept for more detail). The property is under public ownership and provides a significant amount of land available for redevelopment. The 2020 Vision Plan recommendations for the site build upon the 2010 Vision Plan.

Several key elements and design considerations are important to ensure the appropriate development of the site:

- Targeted uses should include offices, housing, research and development, and educational and/or cultural uses.
- Development along Tryon Street should attain a high level of design and iconic architecture and should be used to establish a gateway to Uptown and the Applied Innovation Corridor.
- Retail and restaurants should be developed along

the ground floors fronting all streets and public rights-of-way.

- High-density office development should be concentrated on the western half of the development to capitalize on the Tryon Street address, extend the Uptown employment hub north toward North End, and provide an anchor for the Applied Innovation Corridor.
- Housing, educational and cultural uses should be concentrated on the eastern portion of the development site with high densities to activate the public realm and support area retail.
- Service functions should not be located along Tryon, 9th and 11th streets or the LYNX Blue Line light rail. The extension of 10th Street from Tryon to Brevard Street provides the opportunity to create a centered street connection that can serve the entire development site.
- Any necessary access drives should integrate pedestrian pathways, and parking solutions should be shared between buildings.
- Structured parking should serve the site's development and be integrated below grade or located on upper stories of buildings, with other active uses on the ground floor. Parking structures could also be wrapped with residential, office and institutional buildings.

north tryon recommendations



The Hal Marshall site should incorporate nicely-articulated buildings and active ground-floor uses.



The Hal Marshall site should include plazas and open spaces similar to those outside the Mint Museum that provide respites from urban activity.



Looking south toward the Uptown core, the Hal Marshall site and greater Focus Area should extend the development intensity of Tryon Street; transition in density toward the First and Fourth wards; and capitalize on new development land opened up by future tunneling of the freeway.

charlotte transportation center

The world's great cities have bustling transit stations through which trains, buses, taxis, pedestrians and bicycles all come together in an urban center. Along with the Gateway Station, a re-envisioned, state-of-the-art Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC) can provide this opportunity for Center City.

Located in the heart of Uptown, the transportation center and several adjacent blocks have significant potential to transform the current station and surrounding area. Anchored by the CTC on its intersection with Trade Street, Brevard Street will be a lively mixed-use “stroll district” with dramatic architecture and large destination facilities coupled with housing, offices, entertainment, plazas and shops



The Charlotte Transportation Center Focus Area includes Time Warner Cable Arena and the Brevard Street corridor.

along an intimate street setting. Building upon the CTC's untapped development potential, the area's numerous transit connections and its close proximity to Charlotte's most popular destinations, this Focus Area will become a nexus of people working, commuting and playing in Center City.

The Charlotte Transportation Center Focus Area is generally bounded by Trade Street on the north, 3rd Street on the south, the LYNX Blue Line light rail on the west, and Caldwell Street on the east. The strategy for this Focus Area builds upon several nearby assets including Time Warner Cable Arena, EpiCentre, Charlotte Convention Center and NASCAR Hall of Fame. It also considers existing and future projects and plans—such as the redevelopment potential associated with the CTC, recent rehabilitation of several historic properties, and improvements outlined by the Brevard Street Land Use and Urban Design Plan—while establishing further direction to strengthen the region's transit hub.

Opportunities and Challenges

In the Charlotte Transportation Center Focus Area, there are **opportunities** to:

- Improve connections between modes such as the LYNX Blue Line light rail, existing bus lines, planned streetcar line and bicycle-pedestrian network.
- Upgrade the bus terminal, which is currently near or at capacity to accommodate bus operations.

- Seize upon trends of increased transit ridership.
- Capitalize on adjacencies to high-traffic destinations, such as Time Warner Cable Arena, NASCAR Hall of Fame and Charlotte Convention Center.
- Implement the Brevard Street Plan, which includes zoning requirements favorable to redevelopment.
- Work with the small number of land owners around the CTC terminal to amass parcels for a large anchor project.
- Catalyze significant transit-oriented development.

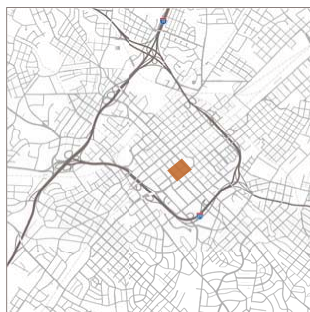
Potential **challenges** in the Charlotte Transportation Center Focus Area include:

- Adequate public funding for redevelopment may be lacking given the current economic and political climate.
- Private development partners may be difficult to attract, and there may be a lack of financial and development wherewithal to put together such a complex redevelopment plan for a new CTC.

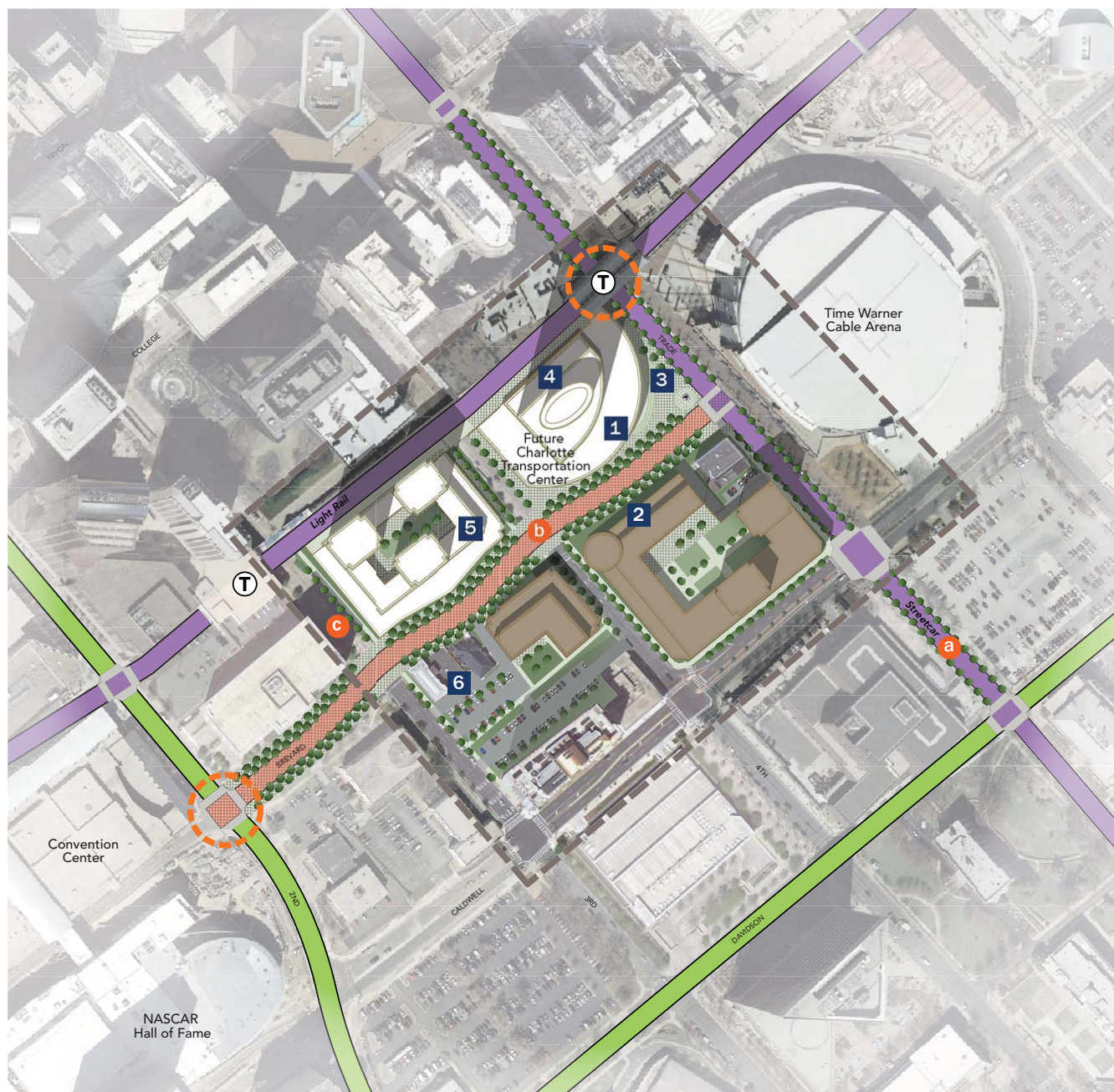
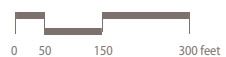
charlotte transportation center illustrative concept

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-  Ward Loop Connection
-  Gateway
-  Plaza/Promenade
-  Transit Station
-  Freeway/Ramp
-  Rail



KEY MAP



charlotte transportation center recommendations



Walkable streets with wide sidewalks, festive landscaping and outdoor dining should be developed along Brevard Street to link Time Warner Cable Arena, the CTC and the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Recommendations

Although creating a new world-class transportation center may take a decade or more to come to fruition, there is a range of key recommendations that can advance change in this Focus Area in the coming years. These include developing strong **connections and linkages**, capturing **development opportunities**, and embracing specific design principles.

CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Redevelopment of the CTC and several adjacent blocks provides a great opportunity to make critical transit connections, create a unified district around Charlotte's major transportation hub, and maximize the tax revenue captured by private development (see Integrated Transportation Network section in Chapter 3: Transformative Strategies for more detail).

Specific recommendations include:

a Establish a Streetcar on Trade Street. A streetcar line utilizing modern vehicle technology should be constructed along Trade Street through Uptown. This would provide critical connections to West End and Midtown. A major stop along the alignment should be located at the CTC.

- b Create a Signature Pedestrian Street on Brevard Street.** Brevard Street is envisioned as a signature pedestrian street with wide sidewalks and an exciting streetscape environment, including art, lighting and sculptural elements. A minimum 22-foot setback should be established from the back of the curb to the primary building façade along Brevard in order to provide sufficient room for pedestrian activity, outdoor dining and a continuous street wall along Brevard.
- c Develop Additional Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections.** Strong east-west pedestrian and bicycle connections should be along 3rd and 4th streets to connect the CTC and Brevard Street to College and Tryon streets; linkages should also be established to Caldwell Street to strengthen the eastern edge of the Focus Area and connect to First and Second wards.

charlotte transportation center recommendations

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

With three contiguous blocks of surface parking lots adjacent to the CTC, there are opportunities to expand the station's footprint, integrate transit modes and create significant new mixed-use development rising above the transit center.

Specific recommendations include:

- 1 Develop a Bold New Charlotte Transportation Center.** Redevelopment of the CTC site would integrate the transit center function with other uses. While there would be an emphasis on facilitating ease of passenger transfers between modes, improving operations and circulation in the area, decreasing noise and exhaust and improving the pedestrian experience, the CTC site is located on prime real estate near the urban core. Redevelopment should be coordinated with design of the Charlotte Gateway Station. Further study is required to ensure right-sizing of operations at the CTC and Gateway Station and to further explore operations as a dual hub system.
- 2 Ensure a Substantial Employment Concentration.** A sizable concentration of office space should be located on the upper floors of the CTC and other nearby development. This will fully leverage the Focus Area's great transit connectivity, support retail and dining along Brevard Street, and activate the streets and open spaces.

- 3 Integrate Destination Entertainment, Retail and Dining.** Ground-floor entertainment, retail and dining should border Brevard Street. Retail uses on the first floor of all new buildings should account for a minimum of 50% of the first floor area and a minimum of 75% of the street edge. Other commuter- and business service-oriented retail such as hair salons, tailors and print shops can be located on second floors. Additional actions as outlined in the Brevard Street Land Use and Urban Design Plan should be implemented.

- 4 Create a Large Civic Plaza.** An "urban living room" should be located at the intersection of Brevard and Trade streets. This plaza should be activated by the new CTC and the diversity of uses along Brevard. The space should accommodate informal gatherings and flexible uses such as kiosks and retail vending while also serving as a venue for large civic events.

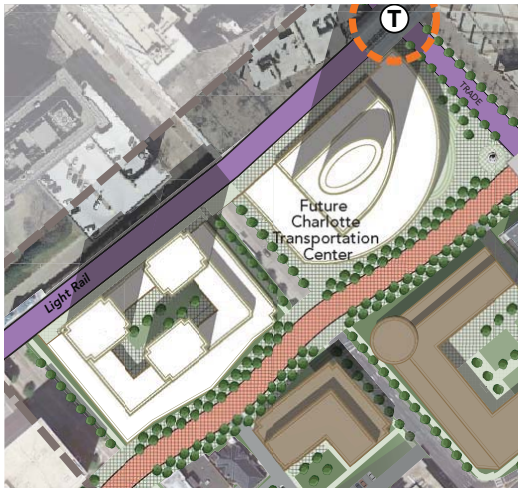
- Incorporate New Residential and Hospitality Opportunities.** High-density residential and/or hotels should be developed on upper floors. Housing should include a mix of ownership and rental opportunities with reduced parking provisions to promote transit ridership and lower per-unit costs. Hospitality development would cater to visitors who are in town for business or pleasure and prefer to use transit during their stay in Charlotte.

- 6 Respect Historic Buildings.** Development in the Focus Area should complement remaining historic structures, including the Grace Events Center and Mecklenburg Investment Company Building. The 60-foot height limit along Brevard Street should also be enforced within 20 feet of existing historic structures. Beyond the 20-foot setback, building heights along Brevard may extend above 60 feet to unlimited heights.



The CTC should feature large setbacks and civic plaza space to accommodate commuters as they enter Center City by rail or bus.

charlotte transportation center recommendations



CATALYST PROJECT

Redevelopment in the Focus Area will build from public improvements along Brevard Street, as well as streetscape enhancements and the new streetcar alignment along Trade Street. However, a bold and fully redeveloped **Charlotte Transportation Center** would elevate the area to new heights as an urban center.

The CTC is bounded by the LYNX Blue Line light rail and Brevard, Trade and 4th streets. The facility is owned and controlled by a non-profit corporation, Charlotte Transit Center, Inc. The non-profit was formed by the City of Charlotte and Bank of America in 1994, with board members now from both the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) and Bank of America. The CTC currently functions as the primary bus transportation hub for CATS, with some growth constraints on its operations. With the recent introduction of the LYNX Blue Line light rail and the planned streetcar line, the CTC is underutilized as a development site. Several key elements and design considerations are important to ensure that development of this public asset can set the Focus Area on a new course.

- The new CTC design should be dramatic and impressive, establishing it as a major gateway and visible feature of the skyline. Some architectural cues may be taken from Time Warner Cable Arena and the NASCAR Hall of Fame to ensure that the area's major facilities complement one another.
- A new civic plaza should be created to accommodate formal and informal gatherings and events. The plaza should be located at the building's southeast corner to maximize exposure to sunlight throughout the year; retail and restaurants should open onto the plaza to help activate the space.
- Rail platforms should be designed with high-quality architectural elements, lighting, landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- The rail platform design should explore opportunities to link to and integrate the 3rd Street/Convention Center and Charlotte Transportation Center/Arena stations.
- As required by the Brevard Street Land Use and Urban Design Plan, the new CTC building should be no taller than 60 feet along Brevard Street and along the edge of the new plaza space, with a minimum setback of 20 feet before rising above the 60-foot height limit.
- Bus access and service functions should be minimized along Brevard or Trade streets; necessary ingress and egress for buses should be consolidated to the extent possible without impeding operations.

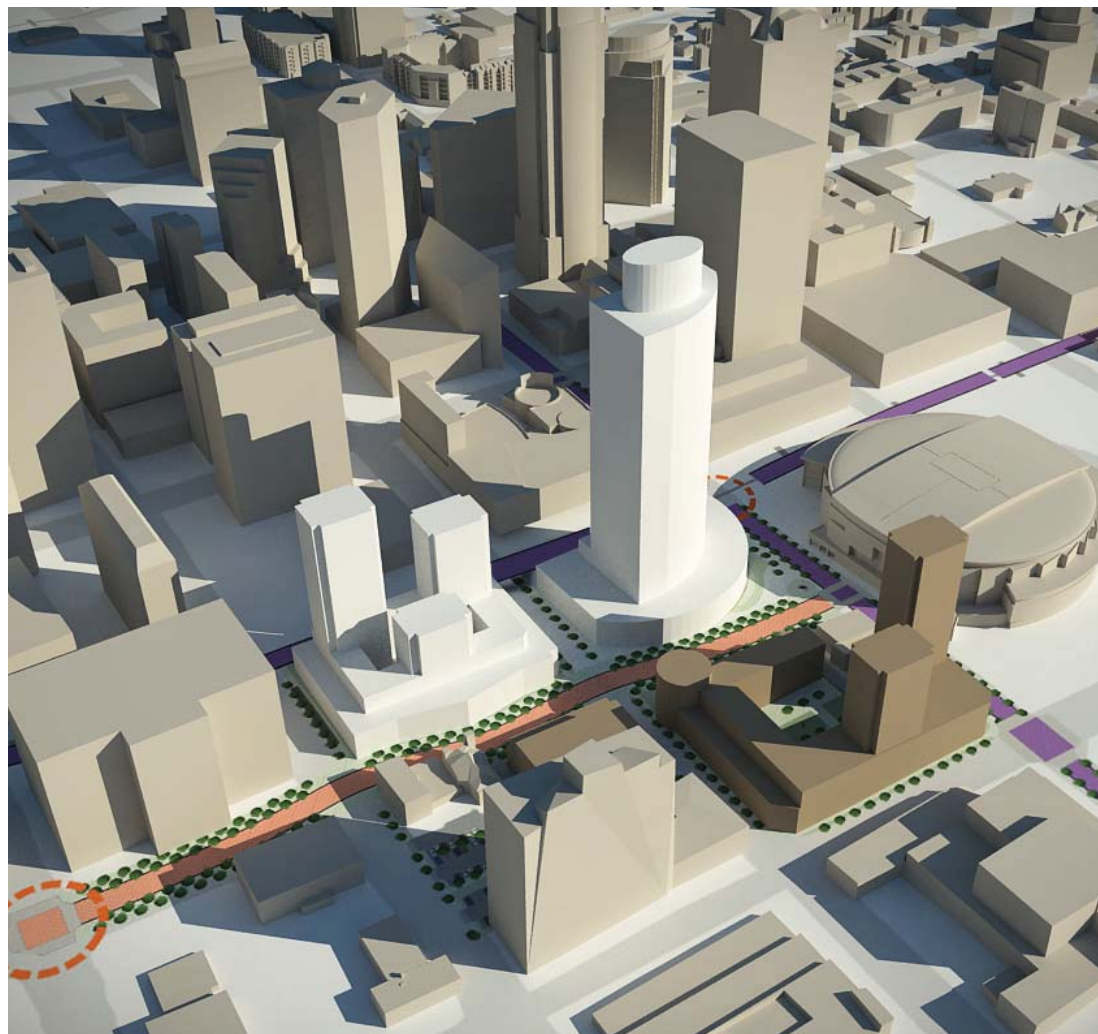
charlotte transportation center recommendations



The CTC should have a large atrium space with ticket purchasing, information kiosks and commuter-oriented retail.



Outdoor plaza space at the CTC should be flexible enough to accommodate special events but intimate enough for eateries and gathering.



The focal point of the Charlotte Transportation Center Focus Area should be a large mixed-use CTC, with tall office and/or residential towers; an impressive terminal atrium space; internal and external ground-floor retail; prominent civic plaza spaces; and bus operations.

west trade corridor

Situated just west of the urban core, the West Trade Corridor holds great opportunity to link to the energy of Uptown, develop a unique University-oriented village and create a focal point for the historic Five Points area.

The Focus Area strategy concentrates new uses and improvements along West Trade Street to create a critical mass of activity and economic development opportunities. The corridor will be lined with appropriately-scaled mixed-use development and strong streetscape linkages to the Uptown core. It will be anchored on either end by two of Center City's premier educational institutions—Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) on the west and Johnson & Wales University (JWU) on the east. It will also include a wide range of urban uses and spaces including retail shops, restaurants, offices, housing and cultural venues.

Leveraging the resources and capital of the educational institutions, the West Trade Corridor strategy focuses on an area that generally includes the Trade and 5th streets corridors, from Five Points on the west to Gateway Village and the future Gateway Station on the east. To better activate the area and make it more walkable and economically vibrant, the Focus Area approach builds upon expansions at JCSU and JWU, the West End Land Use and Pedscape Plan, the Third Ward Neighborhood Vision Plan, and a planned streetcar line along West Trade Street.

Opportunities and Challenges

In the West Trade Corridor Focus Area, the primary opportunity is to grow the universities. Additional **opportunities** include:

- Leverage the activity, programming and intellectual capital of JWU and JCSU's campuses to further West Trade Street's economic and physical development.
- Build upon the success of Gateway Village to create additional jobs and provide more destinations and amenities that will attract youth to Uptown.
- Provide transit connections along West Trade Street to link the Five Points neighborhood and Gateway Village to both of Center City's transportation centers, the core of Uptown and beyond to Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) and Presbyterian Hospital.
- Capitalize on campus efforts at JCSU and JWU to build facilities that interface better with the street and their neighbors.

Potential **challenges** in the West Trade Corridor Focus Area include:

- Vacant lots and auto-oriented uses dominate much of the landscape between JCSU and JWU.
- The pedestrian environment is relatively fragmented and made less inviting by fast-moving traffic, insufficient lighting, a general lack of street furnishings, an abundance of off-street surface parking, and buildings with relatively large setbacks along the sidewalk.

- The streets are arranged in an irregular pattern; consequently the relatively long blocks contribute to longer trip distances and poor connectivity.
- There is a lack of sufficient retail to serve neighborhood residents and students, faculty and staff of JCSU and JWU.
- The I-77 freeway and associated ramps occupy a large amount of land near the center of the corridor, creating a significant physical and psychological barrier between Uptown and West End.



Five Points/Biddleville is a key neighborhood anchoring the western end of the West Trade Corridor Focus Area.

west trade corridor illustrative concept

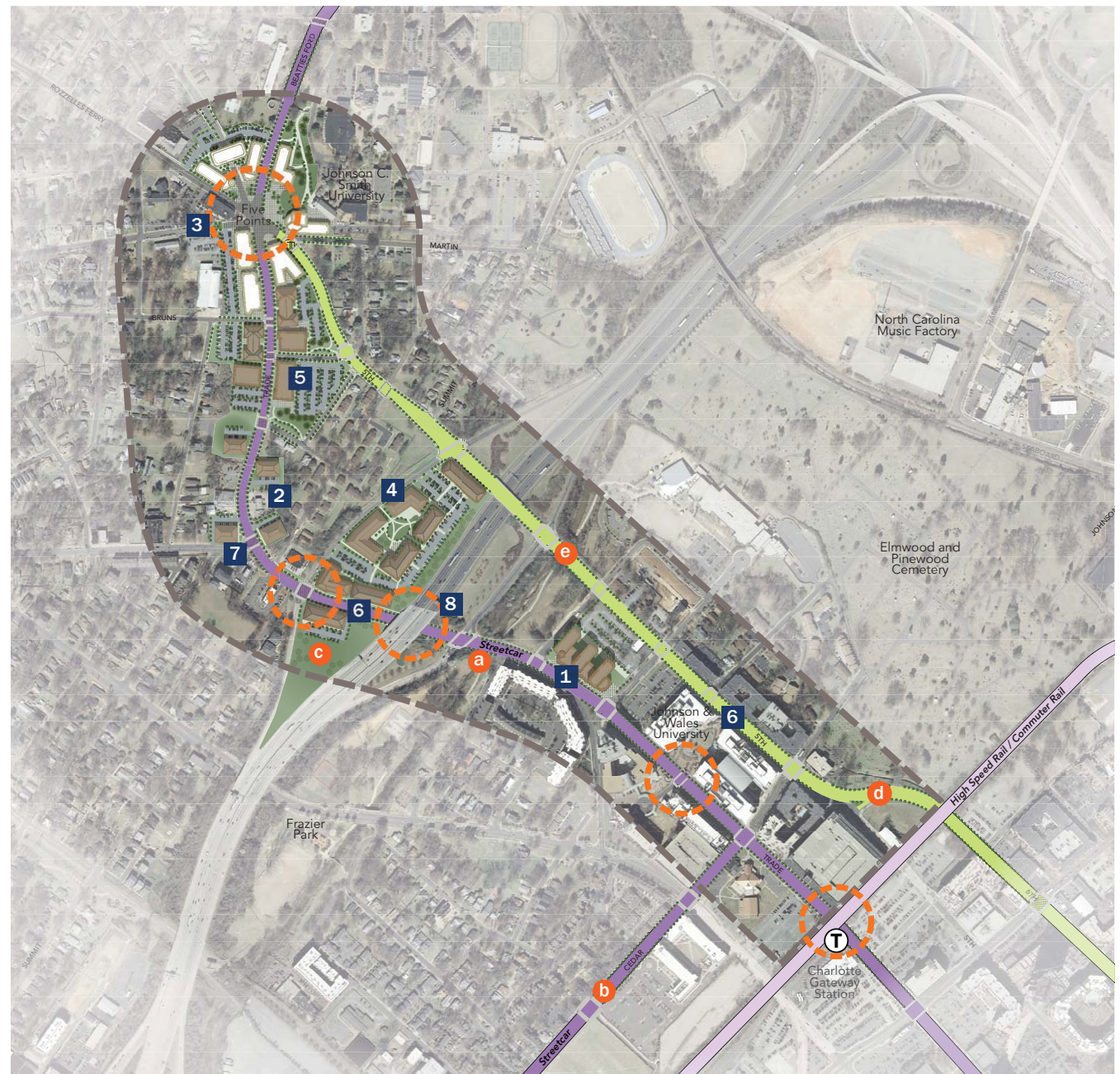
The concept illustrates key recommendations related to connections, development opportunities and catalyst projects, which are highlighted on the following pages.

-  Focus Area Boundary
-  Connection/Linkage
-  Development Opportunity
-  Catalyst Project
-  New Development
-  Regional Transit Connection
-  Local Transit Connection
-  Green Street Connection
-  Gateway
-  Plaza/Promenade
-  Transit Facility
-  Freeway/Ramp
-  Rail



KEY MAP

0 50 150 300 feet



west trade corridor recommendations



A modern streetcar would create a strong connection and stimulate economic development on West Trade.



High speed rail connections may be a part of the West Trade Corridor's future at Charlotte Gateway Station.

Recommendations

Lasting change in the West Trade Corridor Focus Area will depend upon strong partnerships between the major private institutions and developers that own much of the land, and the public agencies that can impact the streetscape and transit opportunities in the corridor. There are several key recommendations that will help ensure the area's success. These include creating strong **connections and linkages**, capturing key **development opportunities**, and developing a specific **catalyst project**.

CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Redevelopment of the West Trade Corridor area provides an opportunity to strengthen the connections between Uptown and West End.

Specific recommendations include:

- a Establish a Streetcar on Trade Street.** The planned streetcar line should be built along Trade Street through the West Trade Corridor Focus Area with comfortable and attractive stops at JCSU, Five Points, Wesley Heights Way, Frazier Park, JWU and Gateway Station. Recommendations included in the Streetcar Urban Design Plan should be integrated throughout implementation to make the corridor pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly.

- b Create Additional Local and Regional Transit Connections.** The planned streetcar line along Cedar Street extending south from Trade Street should also be constructed. Regional rail connectivity (including future high speed rail) should be centered at Gateway Station. Strong pedestrian connections, such as widened crosswalks, modernized cross signals, upgraded lighting and street trees, should be prioritized along West Trade Street from Five Points to the Gateway Station. Bus stops must also be improved throughout the West Trade area. Establishing regional transit connections from the Charlotte Douglas International Airport to Uptown via light rail or streetcar extension should also be considered.

west trade corridor recommendations

c Reconfigure the I-77 Freeway Interchange. The I-77 freeway ramps at Trade and 5th streets should be reconfigured to consolidate access, improve east-west connectivity through the area and make land available for redevelopment. The existing configuration inefficiently utilizes a large amount of land. Reclaiming a portion of the land for new development would help improve the pedestrian environment and create significant economic development opportunities. Improvements to the freeway ramps should also include enhancements of the pedestrian environment at the approaches to and beneath the I-77 underpass with improved lighting, artwork, landscaping and structural elements. The design treatment should incorporate the reconfiguration of the freeway ramps and could include active retail spaces.

d Prioritize Pedestrian and Bicycle Connection on 5th Street. This street should have an appropriate landscape and materials palette that creates an attractive street design and utilizes stormwater management techniques. Pedestrian and bicycle amenities—such as wide sidewalks, bike parking, path lighting, designated and/or “sharrow” lanes, bike route signage—should link the West Trade Corridor area to Fourth Ward Park, Irwin Creek Greenway and public spaces at Five Points.

e Create Additional Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections. As part of the Gateway Station development master plan, a specific urban design plan should be undertaken to recommend and outline bicycle and pedestrian connections with safe, inviting pedestrian crossings throughout the West Trade Corridor Focus Area. Emphasis should be placed on links to public transit, residential areas and the Irwin Creek Greenway.



Improvements must be made to the I-77 underpass to create a comfortable connection for pedestrians and bicyclists.



5th and West Trade streets are primary corridors for the improvements that will better connect bicyclists between Five Points and Uptown.

west trade corridor recommendations



The Johnson & Wales University and Gateway Village area should be expanded with additional urban mixed-use development.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The vacant and underutilized land of surface parking lots and freeway infrastructure provides many development opportunities. Gateway Village will continue to revitalize and densify the east end of the corridor with a mix of ground-floor retail and dining, educational uses, offices and housing. The combination of streetcar along Trade Street and freeway interchange reconfiguration can help make the land west of I-277 attractive for new development. Medium-density mixed-use residential should be developed along Trade from Frazier Avenue to Montgomery Street. Five Points should be a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood center anchored by new JCSU facilities. Ground floors along Trade should include restaurants and shops to support area residents and workers.

Specific recommendations include:

1 Expand Gateway Village. The success of the Gateway Village development should be built upon to encourage additional office, institutional, hospitality, retail, dining and housing development between the high speed rail and Irwin Creek Greenway. Active uses for ground floors (e.g. culinary laboratory space) should be encouraged on sites that have remained vacant since adopting the Gateway Village Master Plan.

2 Establish a “Restaurant Row.” The concentration of restaurants along West Trade Street should be further strengthened through additional eateries that have a wide array of cuisines, dining atmospheres and price points. This destination area can integrate JWU’s culinary program with ground floor laboratories, test kitchens and incubator restaurant spaces.

3 Create an Activity Node at the Five Points Intersection. A student-oriented activity node should be developed at the Five Points intersection. A mix of destinations should primarily target students and neighborhood residents. Public open space for outdoor events should be activated by institutional uses, office and small-scale retail uses, as well as multi-family residences. JCSU should site civic and neighborhood-oriented uses (such as a performance hall and a school bookstore) at or near the Five Points intersection. Gateway elements should mark the entrances from the West Trade Street corridor and integrate elements that relate to the neighborhood’s history and culture.

4 Increase Employment Opportunities. Office uses should be established that support and benefit from the area’s proximity to institutions and the Uptown core. Gateway Station should anchor a high-density employment node on the east end of the corridor. In addition, medium-density employment uses could be developed on land created by the freeway interchange reconfiguration.

west trade corridor recommendations

5 Create New Residential Opportunities. High-density mixed-use housing (approximately 35-40 units per acre) should be developed along Trade Street between Frazier Avenue and Montgomery Street to serve nearby employees, students, faculty and staff. Medium-density housing (approximately 20-30 units per acre) should be developed along Trade between Five Points and I-77, with building heights stepping down toward existing neighborhoods. Housing should include a mix of ownership and rental properties with a large proportion comprised of studios, one-bedroom units and suites. Partnerships should be facilitated between the universities and developers to provide student housing. All new development should be sensitive to the historic character of West End.

6 Develop Neighborhood Retail. Ground-floor retail, restaurant, entertainment and other active commercial uses should be developed along Trade Street, as well as along 5th Street inside the freeway loop. Retail should primarily cater to employees, residents and students working, living and studying in the Focus Area.

7 Improve the Streetscape. Streetscape enhancements should be prioritized along Trade Street, 5th Street and perpendicular streets that connect residential areas to transit and neighborhood retail. The potential for mid-block crossings with curb extensions and/or pedestrian activated signals between Wesley Heights Way and Five Points should be explored.

8 Establish Gateways Along Trade Street. Gateways should include artwork, improved lighting, signage and other sculptural elements. These features should mark the entrances at each end of the West Trade Street corridor and at the freeway ramps. They should integrate historic and cultural elements related to the neighborhoods and JCSU.



Future streetcar could be combined with residential opportunities for students, faculty and staff, such as this example in San Diego.



Neighborhood and student-oriented services, retail and gathering places should be developed along West Trade Street, particularly near the university campuses.

west trade corridor recommendations



West Trade Street looking toward gateway to Johnson C. Smith University (existing).



West Trade Street looking toward gateway to Johnson C. Smith University (proposed). The Five Points intersection should be improved with stronger crosswalks, pedestrian enhancements, mixed-use student housing, and new university buildings that come to the street edge and engage the neighborhood.

west trade corridor recommendations

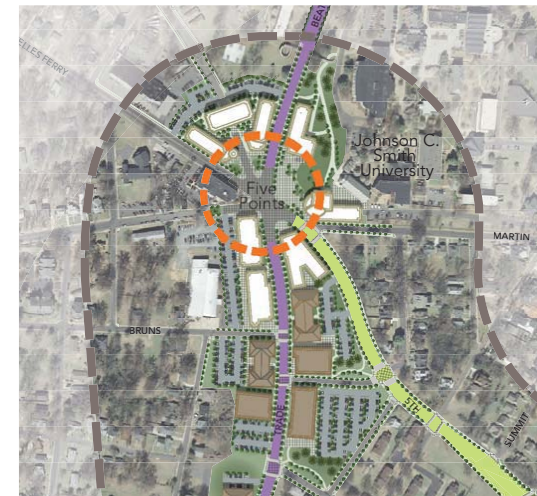
CATALYST PROJECT

Establishing a strong anchor around **Five Points** at the west end of Trade Street will have the greatest impact on the Focus Area. Development and redevelopment should create a distinct identity and catalyze private investment, including institutional projects.

Five Points is generally defined as the intersection of Trade Street, Beatties Ford Road, Rozelles Ferry Road and 5th Street. Land surrounding the intersection is under both public and private ownership. JCSU controls a significant portion of land located at the northeast corner of Beatties Ford, 5th and Martin streets.

Several key elements and design considerations are important to ensure the appropriate development of Five Points:

- Development of the JCSU land located at the northeast corner of Beatties Ford, 5th and Martin streets should include semi-public and civic uses such as performance space, galleries, and a school store and dining annex.
- New construction on the JCSU land should be designed to attract pedestrian-oriented uses that relate to the street with primary entrances at the Five Points intersection. At the same time, any new construction should complement the historic character and existing buildings of the campus.
- High-density mixed-use development should be concentrated on the land not under JCSU ownership, with office and residential uses above ground-floor retail space. The university should be encouraged to purchase and redevelop additional land at the Five Points intersection.
- Development should attain a high level of design and sense of entry; the intersection geometry creates opportunities for unique “flat iron”-like buildings.
- The entire intersection and adjacent plazas should be upgraded with distinctive paving, lighting, landscaping, and streetcar and pedestrian amenities that relate to the surrounding buildings.
- Service access and parking solutions should be shared between buildings and located at least 100 feet from corners to limit the visual dominance of parked vehicles along the corridor. Such a development pattern would also serve to preserve land to accommodate future market demand.



west trade corridor recommendations



A strong node at Five Points (foreground) would act as an anchor of the community that is strongly connected to the Uptown core via 5th and Trade streets.



Future institutional uses at JCSU, such as a new performing arts center, should be brought out to the street to increase pedestrian activity in Five Points. New civic uses would attract citizens from other parts of the city to Five Points.

south end

Over the next 10 to 20 years, South End will flourish as the “Creative District of the Carolinas.” It will continue to grow as a dynamic urban neighborhood, enriching the lives of the entire community through its many recreational, historical and commercial offerings.

This Focus Area will continue to be home to a unique shopping experience. Nowhere else in Charlotte can one find a mix of arts, home furnishings, interior and architectural design firms, and consumer goods shops so well-integrated into residential neighborhoods of single-family homes, townhomes and apartments. South End will be a regional destination, supported by a wide variety of visitor amenities. As the LYNX light rail system continues to expand, the area will become even more accessible. The growing transit network and the roads that accompany it will bring more people to the district.

Recommendations for South End focus on specific areas that build upon the approximately \$600 million of investment already made by the public and private sectors. The Focus Area is bounded by Bland Street to the north, South Tryon Street to the west, Tremont Avenue to the south, and South Boulevard to the east. This section builds upon design principles, concepts and policy articulated in the South End Station Area Plan, adopted in 2005, as well as supportive transit-oriented-development zoning policies.

Opportunities and Challenges

In the South End Focus Area, there are **opportunities** to:

- Develop new projects on infill sites and reuse existing, adaptable buildings to preserve and enhance the strong historic character.
- Build upon the cluster of creative industries and activities to support the new economy and the Applied Innovation Corridor.
- Extend and improve access to the Rail Trail paralleling the LYNX Blue Line light rail.
- Celebrate the distinctive architectural character complemented by a well-articulated street pattern that is easy for pedestrian navigation.
- Leverage well-organized residents and property owners committed to neighborhood improvement.
- Market the accessibility provided by the LYNX Blue Line light rail, I-77/I-277 and major thoroughfares.
- Improve connections to nearby neighborhoods and Uptown businesses and amenities.
- Calm wide streets by adding on-street parking, further enhancing the attractiveness of eclectic retail areas and restaurants.

Potential **challenges** in the South End Focus Area include:

- The area has many main thoroughfares, with heavy traffic volumes that are inhospitable to pedestrians and hinder the growth of a more robust shopping experience.

- A lack of recognizable neighborhood gathering places, parks or recreation facilities for residents.
- Insufficient neighborhood services to support a growing population.
- Uncoordinated and dispersed arts, cultural and entertainment destinations.
- Small parcels with multiple owners make it difficult to assemble underutilized or vacant land for new development.
- Some buildings—especially older, vacant structures—are in poor condition.
- A general lack of a tree canopy, street furnishings and pedestrian amenities.
- Inactive spaces adjacent to the LYNX Blue Line light rail that detract from the urban environment.











New mixed-use development characterizes several parts of the South End Focus Area.



South End Illustrative Concept

The concept illustrates key recommendations related to connections, development opportunities and catalyst projects, which are highlighted on the following pages.

-  Focus Area Boundary
-  Connection/Linkage
-  Development Opportunity
-  Catalytic Project
-  New Development
-  LYNX Light Rail Transit
-  LYNX Transit Station
-  Plaza/Promenade

south end recommendations

Recommendations

South End's continued transformation will focus on creating a well-connected, full-service neighborhood with an identifiable center that has a concentration of activities. Specific recommendation areas include creating strong **connections and linkages**, capturing key **development opportunities**, and developing a corridor-oriented **catalyst project**.

CONNECTIONS AND LINKAGES

Surrounded by I-77 and I-277 and crossed by the LYNX Blue Line light rail and three major thoroughfares, South End is one of the most accessible areas in Charlotte. Pedestrian connections also have significant importance. Enhancing connections for all modes is key to South End's evolution.

Specific recommendations include:

a Enhance the LYNX Blue Line "Rail Trail."

Paralleling the LYNX Blue Line light rail from New Bern Street to Morehead Street is a path known as the "rail trail." This paved pathway is used by joggers and pedestrians and connects galleries and neighborhood amenities. However, the "rail trail" could be much more. Its connection to Uptown is severed by I-277, and this lack of continuity reduces its role as an important pedestrian and bicycle link. Requirements should be enhanced to include amenities such as landscaping, benches, decorative lighting, orientation signs, exercise areas, art and

pocket parks. This could make the rail trail not only a great urban greenway trail but also a destination, similar to the High Line that was developed in the industrial West Side neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City. Furthermore, the trail should connect to improvements already made on South Boulevard at Carson Boulevard and to Tryon Street headed into Uptown. This pathway should be branded throughout South End and beyond as a place to visit and recreate. Urban design guidelines should be created and adopted so future private and public sector development could help implement proposed improvements. The South End portion of the rail trail could act as a pilot project that could be applied to the remainder of the Blue Line and to other rapid transit corridors in Charlotte.

b Overcome the Barrier of South Boulevard. South Boulevard is a major thoroughfare on the eastern edge of South End. While it is used by thousands of vehicles per day, the road is a barrier between Dilworth, South End and Wilmore. Building upon the recommendations of the South End Station Area Plan, a comprehensive streetscape and infrastructure implementation effort should be conducted to help retrofit the roadway and create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Improvements would help spur economic development and retail opportunities similar to the development at the corner of Park Avenue and South.

c Improve the Environments of South Tryon Street and West Boulevard. These thoroughfares are also major connectors that help South End relate to the surrounding neighborhoods. They bring vitality and economic life to the district and could contribute even more to this Focus Area's vibrancy. As gateways into South End, these roadways could be the focus of pedestrian improvements, public art and future development.

d Boost Connections to Other Neighborhoods. South End is fortunate to have a well-established pattern of streets that provides convenient connections for vehicles and pedestrians to neighboring Wilmore, Dilworth and Uptown. Moreover, many of these streets connect South End to nearby amenities such as parks, schools and businesses. However, pedestrian-friendly crossings and streetscape amenities are lacking on many side streets. Streets such as West Boulevard and Park, Tremont and Kingston avenues could benefit from improved tree canopies, wayfinding signage, decorative lighting and wider sidewalks. Creating and implementing a larger streetscape improvement plan would enhance pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods.

south end recommendations



The Design Center of the Carolinas should be leveraged with new development to further cultivate South End's identity as a destination for arts, design and creativity.



A neighborhood square should be developed in South End similar to South Park in San Francisco, which is a central gathering space in the middle of a creative, design and technology district.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Stimulating future growth in South End includes the identification of appropriate locations for specific types of development. Building on the historic, industrial and design character of the area, new development will fill in gaps in the urban fabric and further support transit-oriented development.

Specific recommendations include:

1 Focus Development Along Camden Road.

Camden Road is a pedestrian-friendly, walkable street that could be lined with shops, galleries and eateries. It is uniquely situated adjacent to the LYNX Blue Line light rail and between South Boulevard and South Tryon Street, with easy connections to all three. In the other direction, Camden intersects with East/West Boulevard. It is the geographic center of South End and has been the focus of recent development. Leveraging this location is critical to the Focus Area's continued evolution. The street has the potential to provide the neighborhood with a center for activity and a sense of structure.

2 Attract an Art and Design School. The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Charlotte Center City Partners, and the Arts and Science Council should partner to recruit an existing art and design school pursuing expansion opportunities. Locating this school in South End would complement the existing creative firms, galleries and design studios and would energize the neighborhood with the addition of students living, studying and working in the area.

3 Create a "Neighborhood Square." One of the challenges facing South End is that it lacks a recognizable place that allows the community to gather, which could also act as a recreational space. Establishing a neighborhood square in South End would address these needs and also help stimulate new development. This space should be located near the corner of Park Avenue and Camden Road, enhancing the importance of Camden as a focal point for the Focus Area. Just as Independence Square is the central gathering space and recognizable center of Uptown, the neighborhood square at Park and Camden could become the heart of South End.

4 Cultivate a Unique Destination for Creative Arts. South End is home to an attractive mix of old warehouses, stores, studios, industrial buildings, apartments, townhomes and restaurants that reflect its eclectic character. Efforts to reuse existing and historic buildings would help solidify this identity. In addition, South End is home to a wide array of art galleries, design studios, live music venues, dining and nightlife establishments. It is home to the Charlotte Trolley and Powerhouse Museum, a facility that pays homage to the neighborhood's past. Attracting other unique destinations that complement the existing creative arts and cultural focus would help South End's status as a regional destination. A task force should be assembled to explore ways to accomplish this goal.

south end recommendations

CATALYST PROJECTS

While significant change has occurred in the South End Focus Area over the past decade, new development should spur further evolution of this distinct district.

Three areas along Camden Road hold the most potential to catalyze future change in the neighborhood and along this important corridor. These areas extend along five blocks, adjacent to the LYNX Blue Line light rail and the rail trail. Consolidated, they can function as the heart of South End. These catalyst sites will provide an identifiable center and will help organize development in the broader district.

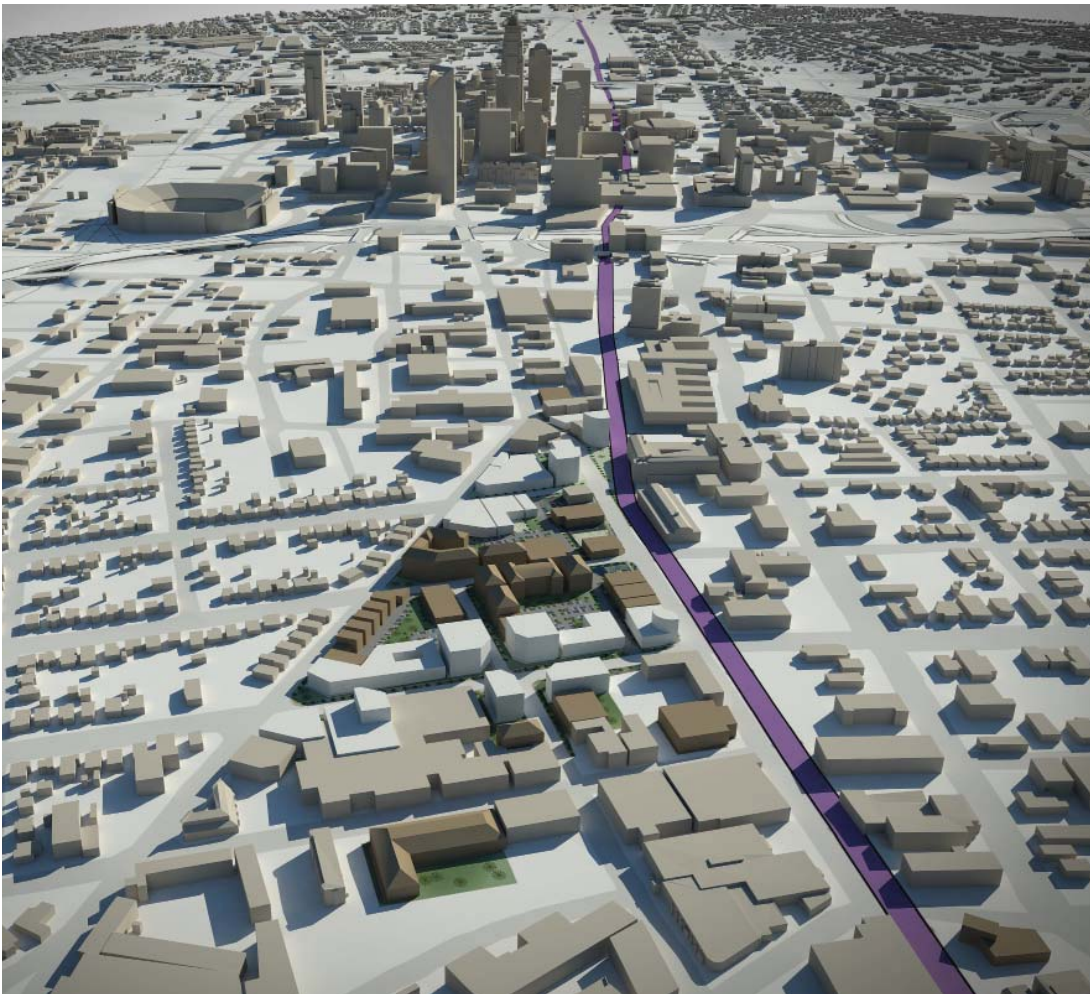
- Camden Road/Park Avenue/Summit Avenue.** Development along this stretch could become the northern anchor for Camden Road. New projects should integrate with existing uses, enhancing the identity of this area. There are galleries, restaurants and housing as well as the Charlotte Trolley and Powerhouse Museum already located within this block. Growth would be triggered by the Bland Street rail station and the close proximity to South Tryon Street. Development at this end of Camden should be assisted by and organized around the new neighborhood square.

- West Boulevard between Camden Road and South Tryon Street.** The intersection of these streets presents a great opportunity for development. It should connect to the Wilmore neighborhood and also build upon the energy of East Boulevard in the direction of Dilworth. The properties on either side of West Boulevard between Camden Road and South Tryon Street are currently underutilized or vacant parcels. Redevelopment of this area would help stimulate development toward South Tryon and help create the density of activity to make Camden the center for South End.
- Camden Road and Tremont Avenue.** The area near the southern end of Camden Road already has a significant amount of development. The intersection with Tremont Avenue should be the center of a southern anchor for this catalytic development along Camden. The LYNX Blue Line light rail station at East/West Boulevard provides the benefit of public transit service to these developments. The redevelopment of underused properties in the vicinity should integrate with the existing uses. The close proximity to major thoroughfares and the provision of safe and inviting crossings would be key factors in providing an improved pedestrian experience along Camden.



The Atherton Mill and Market near the intersection of South End Road and Tremont contribute to the southern anchor of the South End Focus Area.

south end recommendations



Catalyst projects should be created in South End to spur further development. New buildings (shown in white) would fill in vacant lots to strengthen the urban fabric. Mixed-use projects should include multi-family housing, retail, office and design studio space, and potentially a boutique hotel. New development should have scale and architecture that augments the historic character of South End and supports the district's identity.

Several key elements and design considerations are important to ensure the appropriate development of these catalyst areas:

- Interesting and attractive ground-floor uses should be developed along Camden Road, connecting South Tryon Street to South Boulevard and including coffee shops, restaurants, galleries and craft vendors.
- Retail spaces at the ground floor should include neighborhood services that are currently lacking, including a grocery store, dry cleaners and banks.
- Pedestrian movement should be enhanced by incorporating public spaces, such as the neighborhood square, and through the use of pocket parks and other streetscape elements.
- Primary uses for infill development should include multi-family housing, retail and a boutique inn with conference space. South End does not currently have any hotel properties and has limited conference space. Parking for the new facilities should be located underground or in the interior of the development.
- Use of iconic and memorable landmarks along Camden Road should be developed to aid in marking gateways and providing orientation.



chapter 5:
implementation

chapter 5: implementation

Center City Charlotte is a dynamic, modern urban environment. With its active community, strong jobs base, attractive neighborhoods, great cultural and sporting attractions, and several colleges and universities, there are many reasons to be optimistic for the future. Under the 2020 Vision Plan, Center City is positioned to move forward with a set of strategies and projects that will make the greater Charlotte region an even better place in which to work, live, play and visit. This chapter highlights specific critical actions that will transform Center City in the coming years. The recommendations for implementation are designed to be easily understood by the public and do not preclude continued community input on the direction of Charlotte's future development.

Organizing For Action

Implementing Center City's 2020 Vision Plan will require sustained participation and coordination between public and private stakeholders. The 2020 Vision Plan process has activated many stakeholders who are already engaged, committed and ready to move on key action items. The successful outcome of these initial actions will be instrumental in demonstrating early progress toward the overall vision, and will be important to maintaining momentum later in the implementation process. Several immediate action items are outlined to keep stakeholders engaged and solidify their roles as "stewards" of the plan.

The following parties are identified as important players in leading or supporting roles for one or more specific implementation actions:

- City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
- Charlotte Center City Partners (CCCP).
- Center City business and property owners.
- Charlotte Department of Transportation (CDOT).
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS).
- Charlotte Area Transportation System (CATS).
- Center City institutions of higher education.
- Arts and Science Council.
- Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority.
- Center City neighborhoods.
- North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).
- Private developers and investors.

Periodic review and assessment of the progress toward achievement of goals and implementation actions are needed to ensure that public and private resources are producing desired results for Center City. New opportunities and challenges will undoubtedly arise over the next decade, which will necessitate that specific actions be reviewed, reconsidered and augmented. The implementation plan is intended as a living document that should be updated annually with a report of progress, a snapshot of recent successes, assessment of funding opportunities, and rounds of critical review and reprioritization. A yearly stakeholder's meeting would be a remarkable tool for this purpose.

Overarching Priorities

This section highlights several top “Overarching Priorities” selected from the recommendations for each Transformative Strategy and Focus Area. These fourteen high-level recommendations are the most critical investments and improvements that should be undertaken to reinforce the current momentum and generate new development activity, economic investment, and on-the-ground vibrancy. Charlotte’s 2020 Enduring Vision will be attainable through the implementation of these priority recommendations. These critical recommendations are not listed in order of priority; they exist as Overarching Priorities to be achieved when the economic climate improves.

The Overarching Priorities were selected out of the nearly 200 recommendations contained in the Center City 2020 Vision Plan. They represent recommendations that will shape the face of the city for generations to come. Each priority aims to achieve significant economic development opportunities and foster the creation of jobs. The recommendations listed here and throughout the document identify public and private partnerships, build upon current investments and initiatives, and facilitate the continued creation of a viable, livable, memorable and sustainable Center City.

The Overarching Priorities are identified below. Each priority is accompanied by information to guide implementation:

- **Responsibility** will be assigned to an organization to act as lead agency in the pursuit of each recommendation. This agency will be responsible for identifying potential partnerships and coordinating the completion of the Overarching Priority.
- The **associated timelines** indicate when the responsible agency or institution should initiate implementing the recommendations. This timeframe will be managed by the lead party and reflects an understanding of the current economic climate.
- **Quick win potential** is evaluated for each of the Overarching Priorities. These prospective projects will act on existing momentum in the community to begin projects in the short-term.





priority actions

PA-1. Baseball Stadium as part of the Ballpark Neighborhood

Constructing the Charlotte Knights baseball stadium in Third Ward will spur private development of entertainment-related retail, shops and services, restaurants and bars, parks, and offices integrated with the multimodal transit station. Uptown's destination assets, and thus the tax base, would be expanded. More importantly, this new AAA baseball stadium will provide much needed affordable family fun for Charlotte during tough economic times. The public and private sectors should provide immediate support to build the stadium.

Lead Responsibility: Charlotte Knights, Mecklenburg County, City of Charlotte, Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: Current, ongoing project

Quick Win Potential: Continue discussions with potential public and private development partners; identify and retain two major sponsors with stadium naming rights; begin construction on the new stadium by October 2012.

PA-2. Development of City-Owned Property in Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area

The sale and development of the public land in the Stonewall/I-277 Focus Area will be a crucial barometer that signals the revving up of Center City's near-term development horizon. Building new office and residential complexes along with hospitality assets, educational and recreational facilities, retail and restaurants will, in turn, attract additional investment to the city by adding new jobs and increasing the tax base. New approaches to attracting private development such as a formal solicitation via a Request for Qualifications/Proposals (RFQ/P) process or a design/development competition should be attempted to reignite interest.

Lead Responsibility: City of Charlotte

Initiate Effort: Current, ongoing project

Quick Win Potential: Create a list of specific users to help shape potential development programs; convene a developers roundtable to discuss specific opportunities and challenges associated with the project/s; develop an RFQ/P or design/development competition to engage one or more partners in the development process.

priority actions

PA-3. West Trade Development Strategy and Implementation

It is critical to establish a West Trade Development Strategy to capitalize on the momentum surrounding the Gateway Village development master plan and the energy generated by multiple academic institutions. This strategy should organize an effort to recruit additional restaurants, food carts, retail and residential projects to West Trade Street. Support for this unique corridor can come from new pedestrian paths, transit opportunities such as expanded Gold Rush service and planned streetcar. A successful strategy will enable additional private sector development and better link Uptown and the Five Points neighborhood center.

Lead Responsibility: Johnson C. Smith University, City of Charlotte Economic Development & Planning Departments

Initiate Effort: Current, ongoing initiative – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Create a program to provide technical assistance to new food cart vendors; explore short-term leasing opportunities for academic institutions in existing retail/office space.

PA-4. Center City's Public Realm

The stature and impact that a beautiful and well-utilized public realm can have on making a city memorable can be observed as Charlotte's citizens enjoy and celebrate the recently completed Little Sugar Creek greenway, Stonewall/I-277 connector, and redesigned South Tryon Street adjacent to the Levine Center for the Arts. To continue to enhance the quality of life of all its citizens who visit and gather in the Center City, Charlotte should continue to invest in the design and construction of unique projects such as the Ward and Boulevard Loops, the "rail trail", as well as planned and proposed parks. A strategy should be developed to plan for, fund and complete these city-building projects over the next ten years.

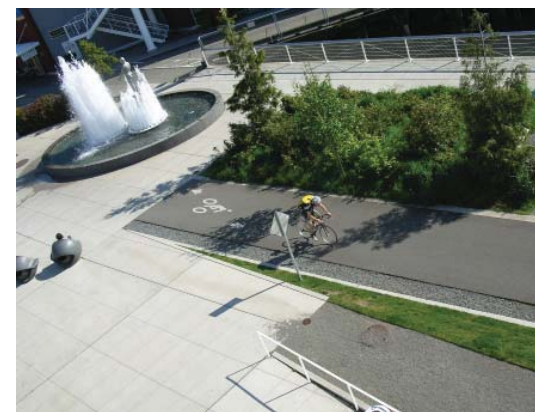
Lead Responsibility: City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation, Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: Complete current, ongoing projects – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Begin construction of planned parks; examine potential for low-cost bicycle improvements along the Ward Loop (striping, signage, etc.); select and begin planting unique character trees for the Ward and Boulevard Loops.

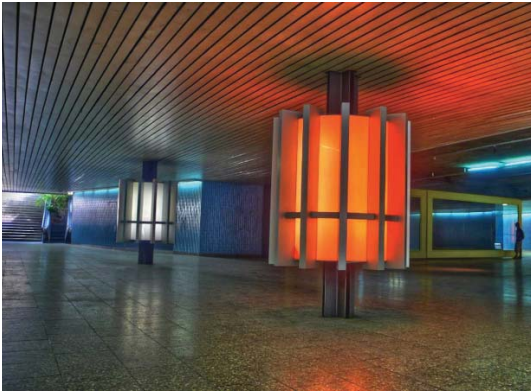


Implementing existing plans for streetcar on West Trade Street will help to link existing destinations and catalyze private development along the corridor.



Well-designed and integrated infrastructure will contribute to a safer, more comfortable and more memorable public realm.

priority actions



The study of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop should identify a set of coordinated strategies to improve the experience of all users.



The Big Dig created additional opportunities in downtown Boston for greenways, parks and new development.

PA-5. I-77/I-277 Study

A comprehensive study of existing and potential infrastructure of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop will be required to insure that the highway optimally serves the long term growth and development of the Center City. The study should also include urban design recommendations to address breaking down the barrier of the loop between neighborhoods; and propose architectural and aesthetic design solutions that will result in a memorable driving, walking and cycling experience.

Lead Responsibility: NCDOT & CDOT

Initiate Effort: 2012

Quick Win Potential: Clearly articulate the scope of the I-77/I-277 freeway loop study and continue dialogue with NCDOT to establish project management team, timeline and funding.

PA-6. Freeway Cap

Building a freeway cap, mixed-use development and park over I-277 will significantly close the physical and psychological barrier between Uptown, South End, Dilworth and Wilmore. The cap would function as a distinctive gateway, signature open space and civic gathering space that would spark additional private development. Well-designed open space, parks and pathways would also improve pedestrian and bicycle connections between the neighborhoods. The initial planning and studies for this facility would be conducted as part of the comprehensive I-277 Study.

Lead Responsibility: NCDOT & CDOT

Initiate Effort: 2012

Quick Win Potential: Identify the first phase of the proposed freeway cap park and mixed-use development and begin engaging key private investment partners; coordinate with overall I-77/I-277 loop study; develop an overall master plan.

priority actions

PA-7. South End Plan

Over the past ten years, the Charlotte Trolley and the light rail led the way in spurring millions in South End investment and development. The area has become a magnet for creative businesses. In 2005, the South End Station Area Plan (SESAP) proactively established transit oriented development (TOD) zoning, development standards and infrastructure recommendations to guide the continued growth of the area. As a result, South End has become a new residential neighborhood with over 3,000 residents. To address the challenges and maximize the opportunities presented by this transformation, a new South End Plan should be produced that includes an engaging community participation program.

Lead Responsibility: Center City Partners, South End Advisory Committee, Planning Department

Initiate Effort: 2012 – 2013

Quick Win Potential: Secure funding to create a new South End Plan; identify a project manager and/or project management team.

PA-8. City of Bikes

Charlotte has made a significant effort to develop a City of Bikes through the adoption of the City of Charlotte Bicycle Plan. Additional bike infrastructure should be developed in Center City according to the recommendations of the Bicycle Plan to encourage more people to utilize this sustainable transportation option. The creation of a bike-share system should be explored, and dedicated and shared bicycle pathways and a full service bicycle station should be built to improve safety and comfort. Ongoing efforts should include identification of funding for planned infrastructure improvements and refinement of plans to improve the ability to use a bike for commuting, shopping, recreation and getting to school.

Lead Responsibility: CDOT; Mecklenburg County Park & Recreation; Planning Department, Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: 2013 – 2018

Quick Win Potential: Develop and issue an RFQ/P for the creation of a bike-share system in Center City; identify and implement shared lane markings and explore the potential for other low-cost striping projects; create a program for bulk purchasing of bicycle racks, lockers and other parking infrastructure; investigate the potential for a bike route to connect the Irwin Creek Greenway to the Little Sugar Creek Greenway through Uptown; develop a “bicycling encouragement program” to complement infrastructure improvements with confidence-building and safety education, as well as bicycle skill and maintenance classes.

PA-9. North End Development Corporation (NEDC)

Create a non-profit corporation to coordinate resources and partnerships, direct investment, and insure the implementation of key programs and policies necessary to develop the Applied Innovation Corridor and North End. Under the direction of the NEDC, North End can become a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood that will be the home of new technology, light industrial and innovation-based businesses and jobs. North End will be strongly linked to Uptown and defined by its unique residential character and industrial history. A partnership of the UNCC Research Institute, Center City Partners, and the City and County Economic Development Departments will develop a strategy to establish the NEDC.

Lead Responsibility: UNCC Research Institute, Center City Partners, City and County Economic Development and Planning Departments

Initiate Effort: 2014 – 2016

Quick Win Potential: Formalize a North End Development Corporation; establish a vision, mission, goals and objectives for the organization; establish a board with representation from key stakeholders.

priority actions



The Auraria Campus in Denver, Colorado includes several facilities shared by the three partner institutions.



The Emily Carr University of Art + Design in Vancouver, British Columbia adds to the vibrancy of Granville Island.

PA-10. Urban Campus

Transforming Center City into a seamless Urban Campus will provide expanded college and post-graduate academic options to help attract and retain an educated young work force as well as provide life-long learning and retraining for more experienced workers. A council or consortium led by CPCC, JCSU, Johnson & Wales, Queens, UNCC and other universities and colleges should be established to develop inter-institutional curricula and programs and to create better physical connections between campuses.

Lead Responsibility: Center City educational institutions; Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: 2014 – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Establish a formal inter-institutional council or consortium; facilitate a discussion between potential partner institutions to identify potential shared facilities.

PA-11. Art and Design School

A new art and design school recruited to locate in South End will create a more vibrant design and innovation district. The school will complement existing creative firms, galleries and design studios. Students will contribute energy and excitement and demand more shopping and services as they live, study and work in South End.

Lead Responsibility: Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: 2015 – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Initiate a study (potentially as part of the new South End Plan) to determine one or more potential locations for a new art and design school; contact existing schools to formally evaluate interest in relocating or expanding in Charlotte.

priority actions

PA-12. Retail Recruitment

Over the past decades, Charlotte has invested millions in building arts, cultural, sports and entertainment venues to make the city a great destination. But, one ingredient—shopping—is still missing. Opening “soft” or consumer goods shops in the ground floor space of Uptown office and residential buildings would round-out and enhance the fun and excitement that visitors and citizens expect to experience. Charlotte could offer the ultimate complementary activity to tourists and increase tax revenue to add to City and County coffers. A comprehensive strategy should be created to recruit local, regional and national retailers to locate in or near destination assets and clusters.

Lead Responsibility: Center City Partners; City of Charlotte Economic Development Department

Initiate Effort: 2015 – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Develop and contact a list of specific retailers targeted for new or expanded locations in Uptown; explore micro-loan and other financial and technical assistance for local entrepreneurs and small businesses interested in locating in Center City.

PA-13. Charlotte Gateway Station

In addition to providing efficient multimodal regional transit service, the Charlotte Gateway Station is envisioned as a high-density employment center that includes office, retail and civic space. The Gateway Station—with the potential to be an economic development catalyst similar to Charlotte Douglas International Airport—should be a prominent and memorable entry portal into Charlotte and Center City. Developing the air rights above the station and activating the street level on publicly-owned land would add much needed revenue back on the City’s tax rolls. Necessary planning should continue even if development is phased, as identifying potential development partners and solidifying project funding and financing will likely take many years. Redevelopment of the Charlotte Transit Center (CTC) should be coordinated with the Charlotte Gateway Station development, but should not begin until the Charlotte Gateway Station project is well underway or complete.

Lead Responsibility: CATS, CDOT, Planning, City of Charlotte Economic Development Department

Initiate Effort: 2015 – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Initiate conversations and negotiations with potential office and retail tenants; explore linking development rights at Gateway Station to CTC redevelopment; identify potential development partners; seek grant funding.

PA-14. Second Ward High School

Given the Second Ward’s centralized geographic location, building a new high school here would greatly expand educational opportunities for students living all over Mecklenburg County. The proximity of the high school to Uptown businesses and private investment could make internships and job placement more accessible to students and provide unique academic options. The architectural massing and design of the high school would be urban and multi-story in scale. The development of the high school would occur in a timeframe as dictated by the increased student population in the system and as indicated in the CMS Capital Facilities Plan.

Lead Responsibility: CMS; Mecklenburg County; Center City Partners

Initiate Effort: 2016 – 2020

Quick Win Potential: Identify and secure development rights for a suitable site in Second Ward.

appendix A:

summary of community visioning

appendix A: summary of community visioning

The 2020 Vision Plan included a visioning and goal setting phase in fall 2009 that focused on studying the existing assets, challenges and opportunities of Center City and gathering input from members of the public, stakeholders, and community and business leaders. The following pages serve as a summary of the community engagement efforts that focused on visioning and goal setting.

In October 2009, the project team hosted a community workshop that engaged more than 400 community members. Workshop participants were provided an introduction to the project and project team, a presentation of the planning process, project schedule and community engagement opportunities.



Participants providing comments at the fall 2009 visioning workshop.

The following ideas and elements were highlighted in the presentation given by urban design consultant Daniel Iacofano, Principal at MIG, Inc.:

Assets and Accomplishments

- Charlotte's role as a regional center and Center City as a major destination within Greater Charlotte
- Charlotte's colleges and universities
- Attractions such as Lowe's Motor Speedway, Time Warner Cable Arena and Mint Museum of Art
- LYNX Blue Line light rail system and other public transit
- Quality of public plazas, parks and open spaces
- Charlotte's history, arts, culture and food

Issues and Opportunities

- Charlotte's role as a regional employment center
- Using transit-oriented design to improve livability and accessibility of neighborhoods and urban core
- Strategic retail investment that makes the shopping experience distinct and competitive
- Interest in energizing the Charlotte skyline with iconic architecture
- Upgrading streets and pedestrian connections to improve quality of life and reduce traffic
- Development of sustainable infrastructure

Following the presentation, MIG, Inc. facilitated a discussion around what workshop participants perceived as Center City Charlotte's primary assets, challenges it currently faces, and the opportunities and vision for the future of Center City. The following summarizes that discussion:

Assets

Culture and Entertainment – food, restaurants, music, theaters, museums, churches, sporting venues, seasonal festivals

Parks and Open Space – 4th Ward Park, Irwin Greenway, Frazier Park and other quality spaces for play and family gatherings

Urban Design – Tryon Street, Spirit Square, inspiring streetscapes, street trees, cleanliness

Economic Development – cultural and entertainment destinations that promote business investment, overall affordability, employment opportunities in banking and emerging sectors, strength of civic leadership

Transportation – growing role of public transit in making Center City livable and accessible, infrastructure that improves pedestrian safety.

Challenges

CONNECTIVITY

- Some neighborhoods lack connectivity to the vibrancy of Center City
- Traffic and parking facilities dominate the street experience and make walking and biking unsafe

ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

- Need to create jobs and employment opportunities for people with diverse backgrounds, educations and skill levels
- Limited retail choices in Center City due to strong competition from suburban shopping centers
- High taxes that discourage small business

LIVABILITY

- Gathering and public spaces are important to the community
- Center City lacks enough centrally located park space
- Needed investment in Center City schools
- Lack of affordable housing and presence of homeless in Center City

STREET ACTIVITY

- Lack of well-designed public gathering spaces along vibrant streets in Center City
- Oversupply of on-street parking discourages street-level retail
- Unmet need for food-focused retail in Center City, including farmer's markets

Opportunities and Vision

INCREASING CONNECTIVITY

- Better walking and bicycling facilities will improve access to Center City and surrounding neighborhoods
- Public transit can be used to spur development in disparate parts of Center City
- Major barriers to Center City connectivity, such as the I-277 loop, should be addressed with improved access to existing and proposed green spaces
- Transit development for the North Line, streetcar, and airport link



A series of community workshops for the 2020 Vision Plan were held at the Charlotte Convention Center throughout the planning process.



Residents of Charlotte arriving for the visioning workshop at the Charlotte Convention Center.

ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

- Enhancing neighborhood identity and main streets with historic features and iconic architecture
- Need to redevelop Center City's historic wards and other West End neighborhoods
- Emphasis on the city's history and preservation of historic buildings
- Developing design guidelines and progressive zoning controls that promote neighborhood identity
- Adding water features to plazas, parks and other public spaces
- Promoting street markets and adding ground-floor retail

IMPROVING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- As a growing regional center, Center City Charlotte is well-positioned to create job opportunities and spur business development

- Attracting new retail into Center City that is distinct from suburban retail offerings
- Promoting and attracting small and local businesses while continuing to support larger companies and sectors like banking

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY AND LIVABILITY

- Improving air and water quality, adding parks and green spaces
- Improving safety and decreasing crime in Center City
- Reducing unutilized surface parking and motor vehicle traffic in Center City
- Making Center City family friendly and welcoming to children
- Promoting transparency in decision-making and planning
- Increasing access to health care and public education

Two additional community workshops were held throughout the remainder of the planning and design process. The second community workshop provided an opportunity for participants to review and provide feedback on the draft vision, goals and overall plan framework. The project team provided an overview of the planning process to date and a summary of the analysis and strategy developed after the visioning workshop. A facilitated large group discussion provided the community an interactive forum in which to discuss the plan and provide input at a critical juncture in the planning process.

A final community workshop provided community members the opportunity to review the Transformative Strategies and Focus Area concepts. A large group discussion and small group exercises allowed workshop participants to directly impact the recommendations included in the draft and final 2020 Vision Plan.

Conclusion

The visioning workshop was a successful first step in learning what the Charlotte community envisions for the future of Center City. Feedback received from the workshop, comment cards, e-mail and blog posts helped to develop a plan that reflects the great potential of Uptown, Center City and Greater Charlotte. Subsequent workshops tested vision concepts and ideas while further input was gathered via a series of working group meetings, stakeholder interviews, neighborhood meetings and information booths.



At the third community workshop, participants engaged in multiple conversations to learn about and provide feedback on plan recommendations.





Community visioning workshop volunteers and facilitators.

appendix B:
acknowledgements

appendix B: acknowledgements

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