



HARRISONBURG

H **DOWN**
TOWN
2040

December 2021

Executive Summary



Harrisonburg Downtown 2040 is the result of a community-driven process designed to learn from residents, business owners, community leaders, employees, developers, students, and others about their vision and priorities for the next two decades of growth and change in Downtown Harrisonburg.

Downtown 2040 is a guiding document to inspire change, raise funds, direct public spending, and form lasting partnerships to make real improvements in Downtown over the next 20 years.

The City of Harrisonburg and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) – the City’s nonprofit partner established to reactivate Downtown as the economic and social hub of Harrisonburg – invited everyone in the community to help shape this plan for the future of Downtown. Despite unfolding amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Downtown 2040 connected with over 500 different people who shared their time and thoughts about what Downtown can and should become.

The plan is grounded in community voices, addressing key issues including racial equity and inclusion, walkability and bikeability, housing, economic development, arts and culture, parking, zoning, parks, environmental stewardship, development opportunities, events, and programming.

Downtown 2040 proposes 20 recommendations or action steps for Downtown Harrisonburg, organized by 10 key goals or overarching ideas that emerged from the community’s input throughout the process. Some of the action steps are lower cost and can be accomplished in the near term, while others are complex and costly and will require time, significant resources, and coordination between the City, HDR, and private property owners.

Though the plan is now complete, the momentum, partnerships, and community participation must continue as we work together to make Harrisonburg Downtown 2040’s vision our reality.

Visit the **COLLABORATIVE MAP**
[HTTPS://HARRISONBURG.LANDAU.DESIGN](https://harrisonburg.landau.design)
 to identify
Special Places, Ideas, and Concerns

I have a great idea for this spot!

*Dream With Us,
Will You?*

Don't miss the chance to **PLACE YOUR ORDER** for the future of Downtown!

Place your order for the future of Downtown!
HARRISONBURG DOWNTOWN 2040
¿Haga su pedido para el futuro del centro?



Images from the Downtown 2040 planning process, which invited community members to weigh in online and in-person about the future of Downtown Harrisonburg.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to all the passionate people who care deeply about Downtown and gave generously of their time, talent, and ideas to help shape this plan for the future of the heart of the Friendly City.

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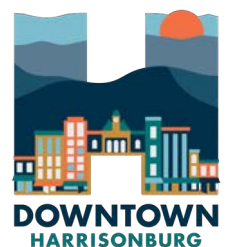


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Introduction

WHAT IS DOWNTOWN 2040?

Downtowns across the country are seeing new investment, fueled by demographic changes and a desire for walkable, mixed-use places. Harrisonburg is no different, with developers and residents rediscovering Downtown over the past decade. Continued growth and development is indeed necessary in Downtown, but so too is a recognition that Downtown is important precisely because of the role it continues to play in shaping the city's culture and identity. This is the intent of Downtown 2040 -- to provide an opportunity for those who care about Downtown to come together to help shape its future and grapple with how best to guide coming change in ways that honor and reckon with the past, preserve beloved aspects of Downtown today, and establish a road map for the next two decades grounded in the values and vision of the community.

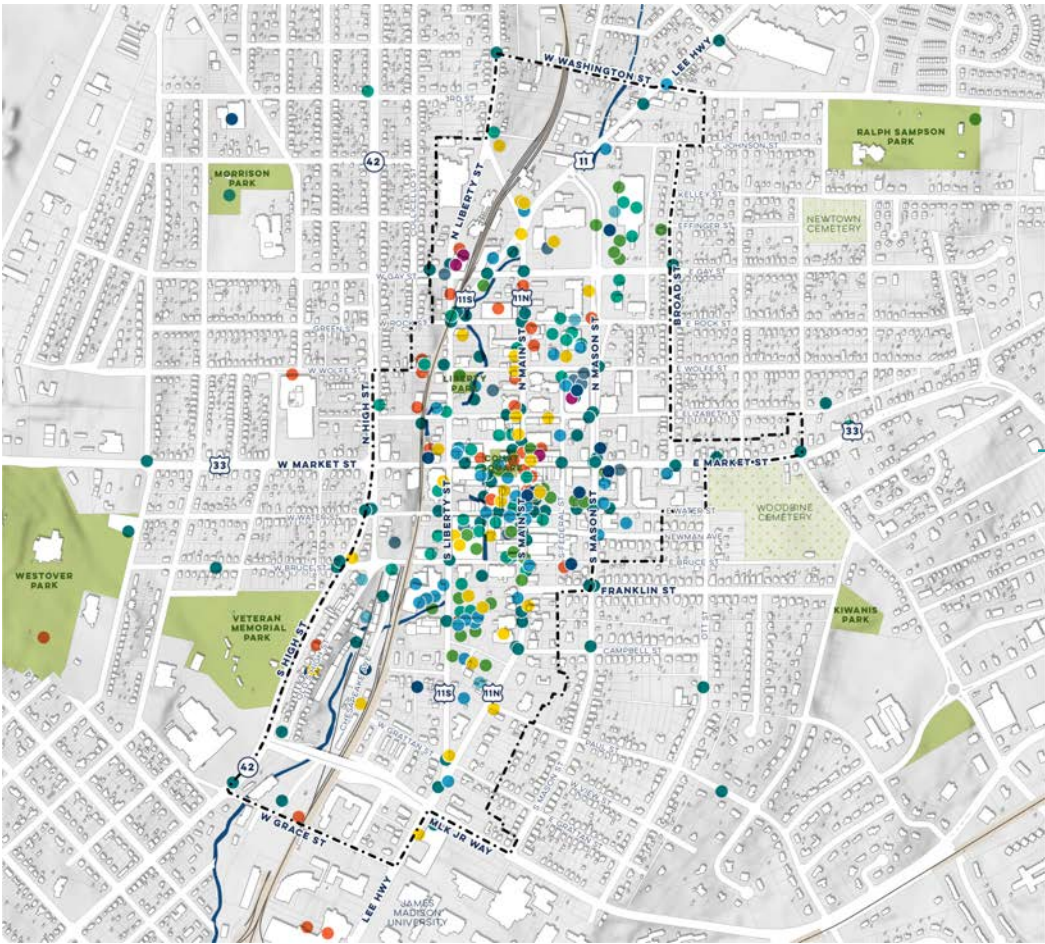
Downtown 2040 is the result of a community-driven process designed to learn from residents, business owners, community leaders, employees, developers, tourists, and others about their ideas and concerns regarding Downtown. It is also a process grounded in research and data collection. The plan addresses the key issues facing Downtown including racial equity and inclusion, housing, transportation, economic development, arts and culture, parking, zoning, parks, environmental stewardship, development opportunities, events, and programming. Downtown 2040 is, above all, a guiding document to inspire change, raise funds, direct public spending, and form lasting partnerships to make real improvements in Downtown.

Downtown 2040 is not just a document. It is a representation of the hard work and momentum that has been built in Downtown by those committed to catalyzing change and investment in line with the values of all who care deeply about Harrisonburg and its future.

Everyone in the community was invited to help shape this plan for the future of Downtown. The process began during the pandemic -- at the start of 2021 -- and lasted almost a year. Due to COVID-19, Downtown 2040's community engagement activities relied on a combination of interactive online tools and activities as well as outdoor, in-person events. The planning team talked with people one-on-one and in small groups, organized major public events, distributed "take-out menu" surveys during restaurant month, created multi-lingual coasters, coordinated regularly with City and Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance (HDR) leadership, met almost monthly with a Steering Committee convened to oversee the planning process, posted material on the City's dedicated web page for the effort, and developed an online collaborative map where people shared place-specific ideas and opportunities. Overall, Downtown 2040 reflects the insights and input of over 500 different people who shared their time and thoughts about what Downtown can and should become over the next 20 years.

Thank you to everyone who participated! Your works populate the pages of this plan.

- Over 40 one-on-one interviews
- 7 meetings with a 30-person Steering Committee
- 2 focus groups to discuss specific issues (homelessness and history)
- Over 460 ideas on the collaborative map
- Over 170 responses to the Downtown survey
- 270 participants in the first round of outdoor pop-up events and accompanying online survey
- 50 participants at the final outdoor event at Turner Pavilion, plus respondents to the online survey

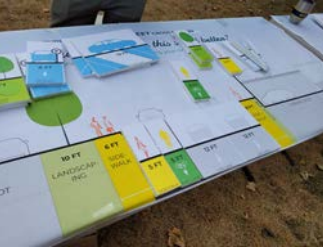
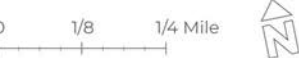


COLLABORATIVE MAP COMMENTS

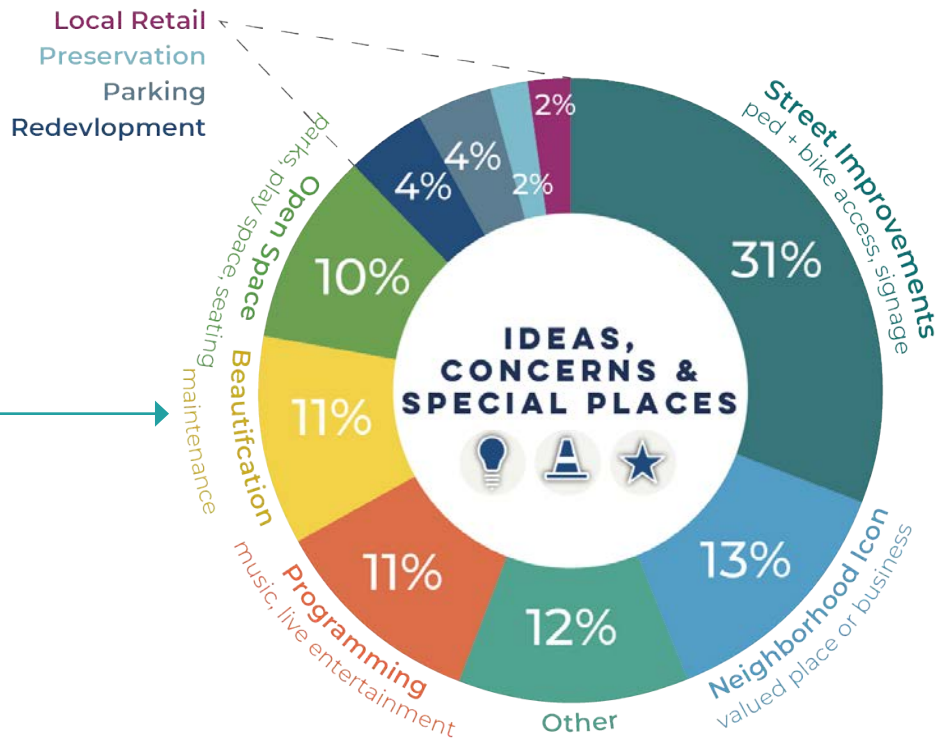
- STUDY AREA
- ART & BEAUTIFICATION
- HOUSING & REDEVELOPMENT
- LOCAL RETAIL
- NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITY/ICON
- OPEN SPACE
- OTHER
- PARKING
- PRESERVATION
- PROGRAMMING
- STREET IMPROVEMENTS

The collaborative map received more than **460 ideas and insights** from the community

Source: Downtown 2040 Collaborative Map



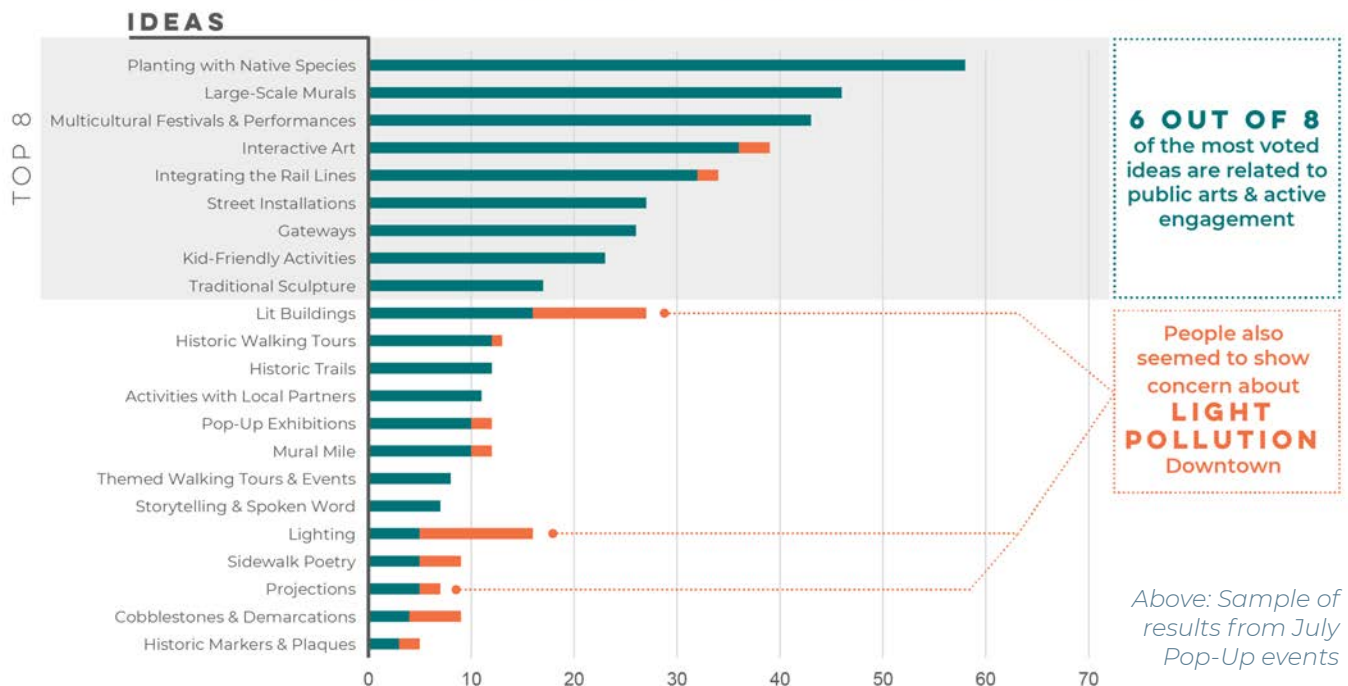
Photos from July Pop-Ups



Above: Photos from July Pop-Up events

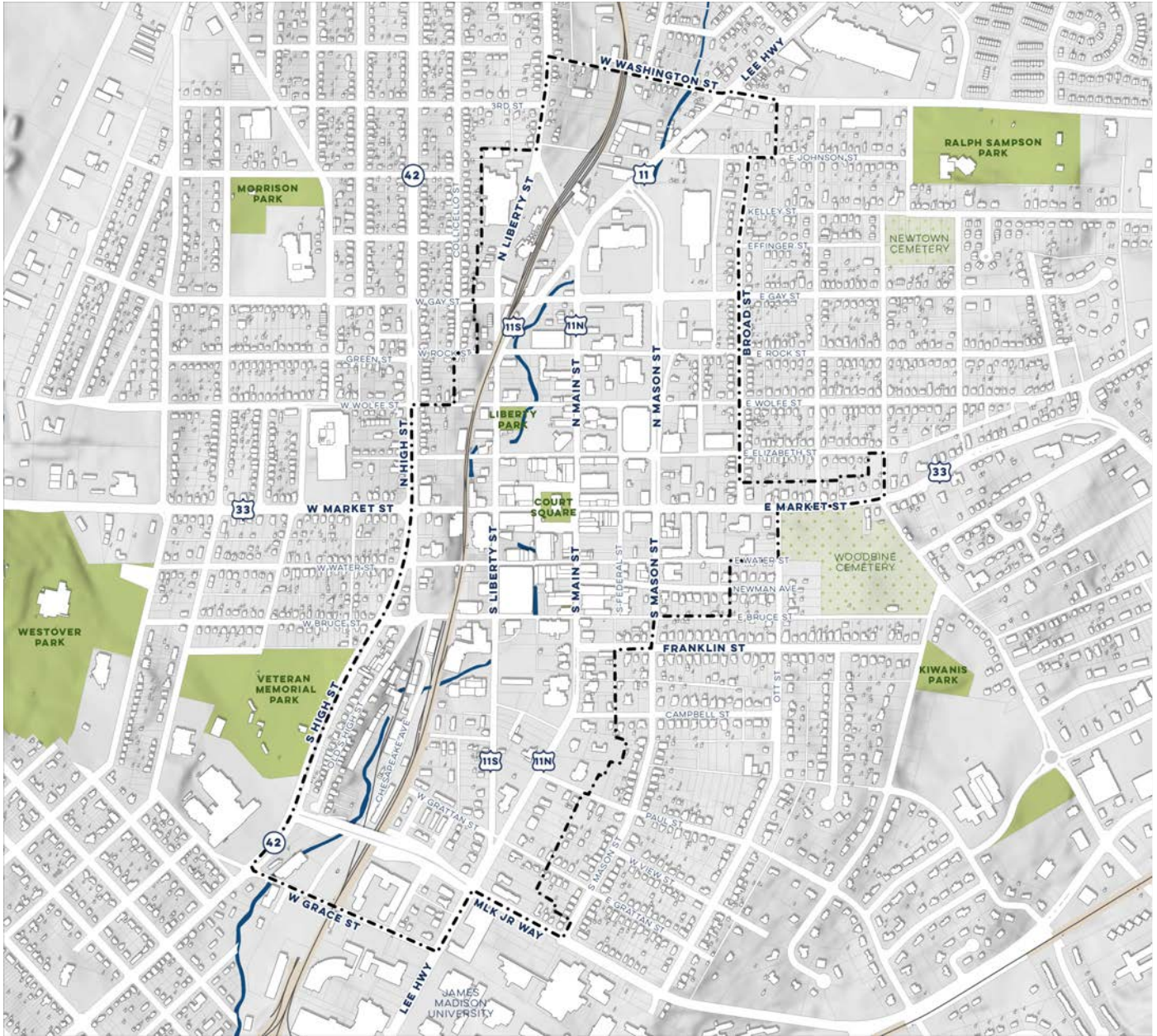
HOW CAN WE INTEGRATE DOWNTOWN HARRISONBURG'S RICH HISTORY INTO PUBLIC SPACE?

👍 THUMBS UP | THUMBS DOWN 🗑️



Above: Sample of results from July Pop-Up events

STUDY AREA



--- STUDY AREA



DEFINING DOWNTOWN

The land use guide from the City's 2018 Comprehensive Plan informed the boundaries for the Downtown 2040 study area. The study area follows the Mixed Use land use designation, capturing the heart of Downtown as well as areas to the north, which have seen increasing development momentum.

PAST PLANNING

Until Downtown 2040, Harrisonburg did not have a comprehensive strategy for Downtown, but rather a range of previous plans and studies addressing specific issues that impact Downtown. Downtown 2040 builds on these prior efforts and research with an eye toward identifying key actions that can be taken to improve Downtown Harrisonburg.

- **2014 Downtown Streetscape Plan** evaluated Downtown gateways and potential options for the design of major streets. This plan led to the Operations Study for Main and Liberty completed in 2020.
- **2015 Plan Our Park Conceptual Master Plan** jump started the effort to create a new Downtown central gathering space.
- **2017 Harrisonburg Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan** explored opportunities to provide new bicycle facilities and improve pedestrian safety throughout the city.
- **2017 Stormwater Plan** identified opportunities to better manage stormwater across Harrisonburg.
- **2018 Downtown ULI TAP Evaluation for City Parcels** provided technical assistance around development and parking and identified the need for a master plan for Downtown.
- **2018 Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan** helps influence land use decisions, zoning, and capital budgeting for the city.
- **2020 City Housing Assessment & Market Study** identified housing trends and research used in this work to understand Downtown's housing opportunities.
- **2020 Downtown Operations Study** evaluated the feasibility and impact of reconfiguring Main and Liberty streets and provides background research for ideas developed in this planning process.
- **2020 Downtown Parking Plan** studied the current amount and location of parking on- and off-street in Downtown and offered solutions to maximize the use of existing parking resources.
- **2021 - 2026 Capital Improvement Plan** provides the City budget and spending plan for different improvements across Harrisonburg. The team reviewed this document and coordinated with City leaders and staff around these and other potential Downtown improvements.

This previous work not only lays the foundation for where we are today but helped to create many opportunities to reshape Downtown.

!!! Downtown Yesterday

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY AND LEGACIES OF THE PAST, WHICH ARE STILL VISIBLE OR PLAYING OUT VISIBLE TODAY.

The Downtown Harrisonburg that we know today is rich with history, evolving over nearly 250 years around a public courthouse at the intersection of road, rail, and waterway within Virginia's Shenandoah Valley on land once inhabited by generations of Indigenous Siouan, Algonquian, and Haudenosaunee people.

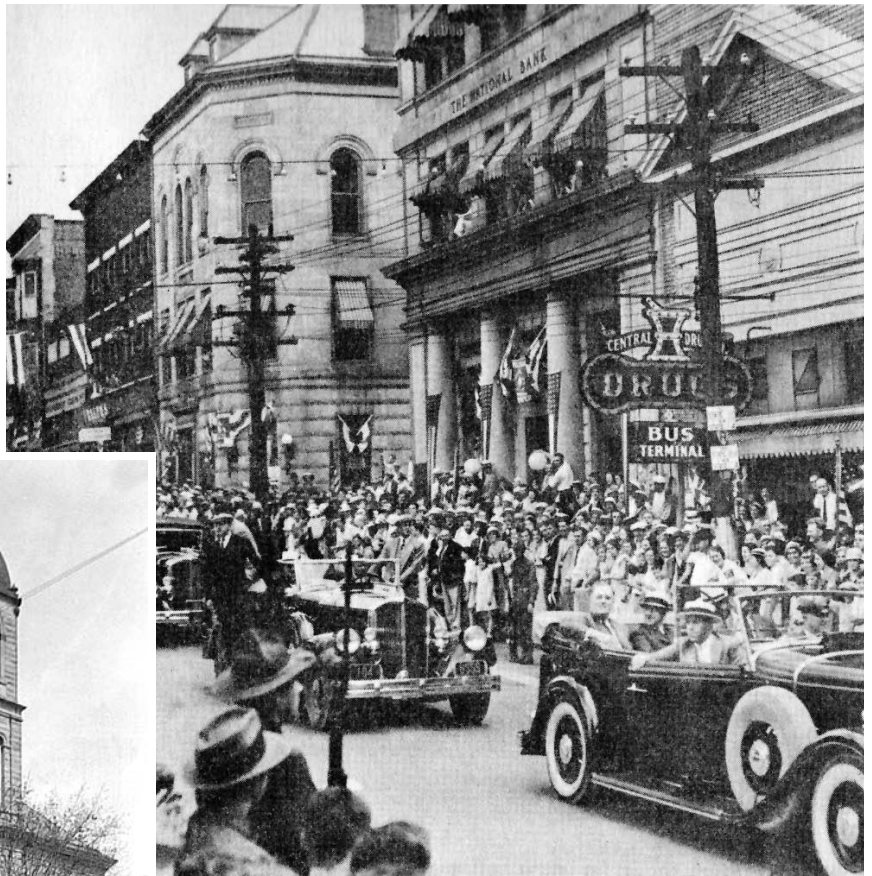
The City started in Downtown with a gift of land from Thomas Harrison in the late 1700s, which is now Court Square. The Court Square seen today was not built until 1897. Since the City's founding, the region's primary role in agriculture (wheat, hay, and poultry) fueled local growth. New railroads, including the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake Western Railway, brought opportunities for additional businesses and expanded industrial activity along what is now Chesapeake Avenue. The buildings designed for these businesses are still visible and influence the look and feel of Downtown today. An interactive map of structures can be found on the City's historic downtown buildings interactive map.¹

As the City evolved, there was a need for higher education opportunities for residents. James Madison University (JMU) was founded as a women's college in 1908. Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) was founded as a small bible college soon after in 1917. Together, these two institutions draw approximately 22,000 students annually and generate a significant amount of economic activity in Harrisonburg. JMU sits at the doorstep of Downtown, and many business owners acknowledge the importance of JMU's faculty, staff, students, and visitors for their bottom lines.

In the 1960s, Harrisonburg took a step similar to so many cities across the United States, using Urban Renewal dollars from the federal government and eminent domain powers to remove the heart of the City's Black community. Newtown, once its own city settled by freed Black people after the Civil War, was annexed by Harrisonburg in the 1890s. The decision to take 40 acres of property during Urban Renewal resulted in the displacement of many people and the loss of many Black-owned homes and businesses, leaving a physical and emotional scar visible in the auto-oriented development that separates the historic fabric of Downtown and the Northeast neighborhood. Today, many continue to tell the stories of past residents and advocate for changes and investment to support a "secure, attractive and strong"² community in the Northeast neighborhood.

¹ <https://harrisonburg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=ad2d662c08b94e5a9fc71bcd1a99fdf9>

² <https://www.nenava.org/index.html>



Above Left:
Historic Image of Court Square
Source: www.harrisonburgva.gov/history

Above Right:
Historic Image of Main Street in 1933

Right:
Historic Map of Downtown Harrisonburg in 1877
Source: David Rumsey Historical Map Collection



!!! Downtown Today

TODAY, A HUB OF COMMERCE AND COMMUNITY WITHIN A REGION LONG-DEFINED BY AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL BEAUTY, DOWNTOWN IS AT ONCE A TOURIST DESTINATION, A BUSINESS DISTRICT, A GOVERNMENT CENTER, A MEETING PLACE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS AND NEARBY NEIGHBORS, AND - INCREASINGLY - A NEIGHBORHOOD OF ITS OWN.

After some years of decline in Harrisonburg's historic Downtown, today the City is thriving and Downtown's vibrancy is much restored. The "Friendly City" is growing, welcoming students to its world-class universities, welcoming immigrants and refugees from around the globe, and welcoming new investment in Downtown. Once vacant historic buildings have found new economic uses and are again full of life - home to independent businesses from agriculture to manufacturing, retail to high tech, and a food and beverage scene serving a loyal local clientele as well as visitors drawn to the region's outdoor recreational attractions.

Downtown's growth and momentum are at times in tension with the legacies of Harrisonburg's past. As a historic urban center with walkable streets platted long-ago, Downtown's infrastructure - its streets and narrow sidewalks - struggle to accommodate all who come to and through Downtown on foot or on wheels, by stroller, wheelchair, bicycle, car, bus, and even tractor trailer.

New developments and a number of prior plans and studies underscore the fact that Downtown continues to evolve today. This opportunity to plan for our shared future is a chance to acknowledge and elevate stories from years gone by and guide coming change in ways that uncover lost or obscured narratives, balancing preservation with growth and redevelopment, and remaining true to the traits that have shaped Downtown over time.

The Downtown 2040 master plan will help address a few key challenges elaborated on the following pages.



Harrisonburg is good at staying true to who it is.
Developers are not afraid to push the envelope in building for the future. You see the change, but it's still the Harrisonburg people know and love.

- quote from public engagement





Various Images of
Downtown Harrisonburg
Today



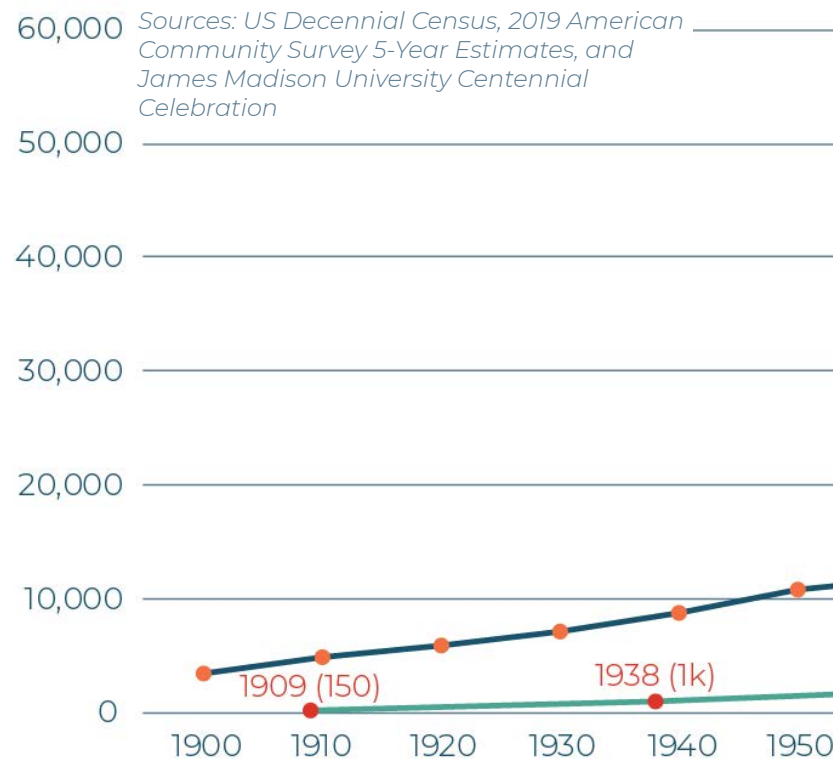
Harrisonburg is growing and diversifying. Downtown is the front door, and should be open and welcoming to all.

Growth in the City of Harrisonburg accelerated in the 1970s and continued through the 1990s due to increases in enrollment at JMU and a major annexation in 1983. Population growth continues today, with JMU's enrollment growing by almost 2,200 students since 2010. At the same time, the area is aging, home to 800 additional residents over the age of 65 compared to 2010.

But one of the greatest recent drivers of growth has been immigration. Between 2011 and 2016, the population in the metro area grew by 3.3% while the immigrant population increased by 73.2%. Without immigration, the City's population would have declined 0.9%.³ This trend promises to continue, with a projected annual growth rate of 1.5% over the coming five years.⁴ Today, the City's population comprises almost 10% foreign-born residents.

Agriculture, including the poultry industry, and the universities have played a large role in attracting immigrants and refugees, and, with an increasingly diverse population of residents from different countries, new services and agencies have found a home in Harrisonburg to serve their needs. Harrisonburg's nickname, the Friendly City, established many years ago, still resonates today as the City welcomes immigrants and refugees.

However, some involved in this work have indicated that Downtown does not truly reflect the City's diversity. More needs to be done to both acknowledge the City's history and the lasting impact of Urban Renewal, and also to celebrate and welcome all residents - those who have always lived nearby, but don't feel at home in Downtown, and new residents from all over the world. As historic buildings are protected and reused, new spaces, programming and art needs to intentionally welcome residents of all races and ethnicities, cultures and religions to Downtown.



³ https://www.immigrationresearch.org/system/files/G4G_Harrisonburg_V6_Final.pdf
⁴ Retail Market Analysis for the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County

"Harrisonburg sees itself as multi-cultural, but the two groups of people that have been here the longest are the most segregated."

"Over 20% of our population speaks Spanish and identifies as Hispanic/Latino."

"We have a diverse region, but we're lacking in integration."

"We need space for cultural exchange and conversation."

- quotes from public engagement

The Harrisonburg Immigration and Refugee office has resettled refugees since 1988 from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia, Burma, Colombia, Congo (Kinshasa), Croatia, Cuba, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan .⁵

⁵ <https://cwsharrisonburg.org>

HARRISONBURG POPULATION OVER TIME





Downtown remains central to job creation, but Harrisonburg needs to look beyond retail and restaurants.

Downtown is home to over 7,600 jobs, and over a quarter (27%) of workplaces are small businesses with 10 employees or fewer. Across the City, employment growth is largely in jobs paying less than \$40,000 annually. The City lost a lot of jobs in healthcare and information, which accounts for this change. Harrisonburg continues to gain jobs in food, education, manufacturing, finance and professional services⁶, some of which are focused in and near Downtown.

For existing Downtown businesses, credit card data shows flattening sales even before the pandemic. Sales tax data from 2018 indicates declining sales, but there was a bounce-back in 2019. The trends over the past few years have been different for restaurants and

retail. New restaurants see opportunities, but existing ones describe a flattening of sales. Retail sales have demonstrated resilience compared to other downtowns due in part to online sales and the specialty products available in Downtown businesses.

Harrisonburg is not a market that can support many more restaurants or retail locations without many more customers. This does not mean job growth will remain stagnant, but rather points to an opportunity to reuse ground-floor spaces for a broader range of small and creative businesses.

⁶ City of Harrisonburg Housing Assessment & Market Study, 2021

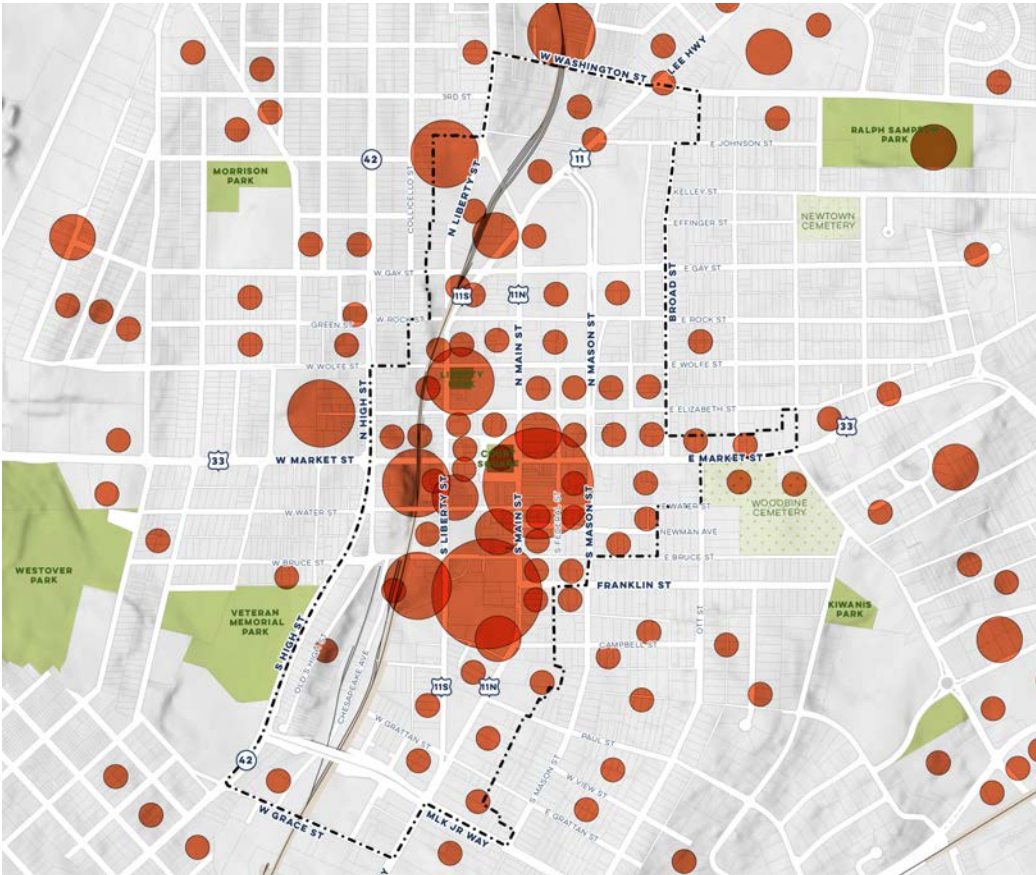
“Survey and interview participants - particularly restaurateurs - indicate slowing to flat sales. Retail is different, but has a different distribution model.”



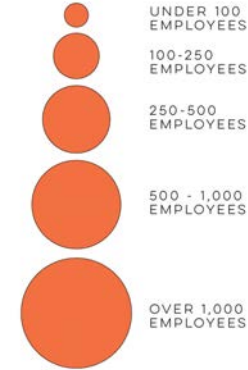
Sources: Downtown 2040 Business Survey, MasterCard, and City of Harrisonburg Sales Tax Data (2017 data not available)



Restaurants have a large presence on Main Street.



EMPLOYMENT CENTERS



THERE ARE **7,673** EMPLOYEES IN THE STUDY AREA.

48% OF JOBS ARE IN EDUCATION, 9% IN MANUFACTURING, 9% IN INFORMATION, AND 8% IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.

Source: US Census OnTheMap

Downtown is not done. There are opportunities for micro-manufacturing, in addition to restaurants, retail, and office.

- quote from public engagement



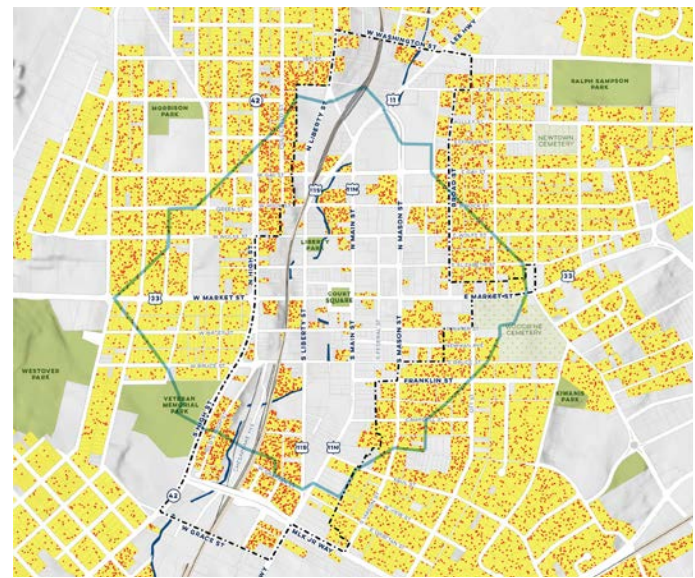
Downtown needs more residents.

Much of Downtown's residential growth has been accommodated through the conversion of older buildings into residential lofts. However, Downtown is running out of old buildings to reuse, and new approaches are needed to create more housing Downtown. Today, there are almost 2,600 housing units in Downtown. 3,400 people (6% of the City's population) live within a 10-minute walk of Court Square, though much of Downtown's housing is scattered in specific buildings. More residential density is needed to help Downtown feel more like a neighborhood and to support local businesses.

Catering primarily to younger and relatively more affluent residents, the availability of housing and the range of housing types in Downtown are severely limited. Many of the units are loft-style apartments available at higher price points than can be found in other sections of the City. At the same time, Downtown has the largest concentration of low-income housing in Harrisonburg, with 181 units (21% of the City's subsidized units) within a one-block radius.⁷ The Downtown real estate market has one of the highest rates of housing purchased as investment properties, and research confirms that buyers with more income are looking for housing, not finding options on the upper end of their budgets, and effectively squeezing the housing options for lower-income residents. In addition, the student market and higher rents they can pay puts further pressure on existing housing when the rental vacancy rate citywide is already low - below 3.5%.⁸

⁷ City of Harrisonburg Housing Assessment & Market Study, 2021
⁸ City of Harrisonburg Housing Assessment & Market Study, 2021

DOWNTOWN POPULATION



--- STUDY AREA
1 DOT = 5 PEOPLE
RESIDENTIAL, MIXED USE, AND GROUP QUARTERS
10-MINUTE WALKING RADIUS FROM COURT SQUARE

Sources: City of Harrisonburg, ESRI

Roughly 3,400 people - 6% of the total City population, live within a 10-minute walk of Court Square

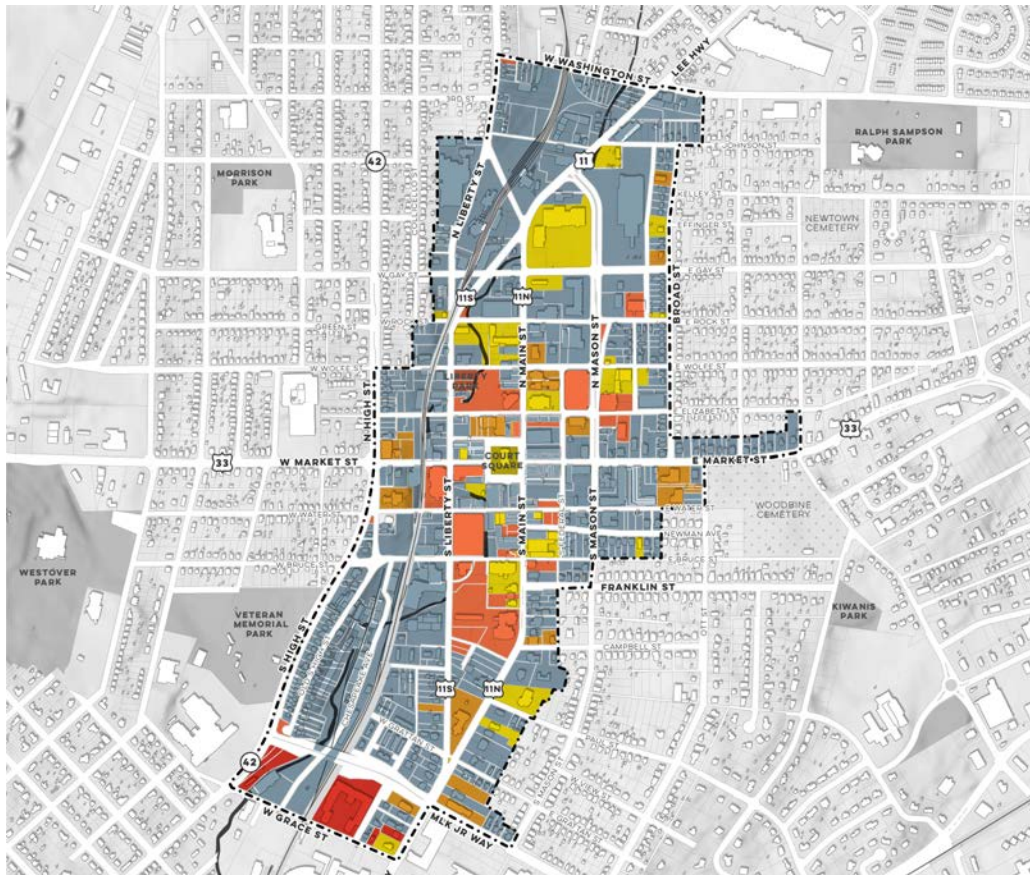


“Harrisonburg is good at staying true to who it is. Developers are not afraid to push the envelope in building for the future. You see the change, but it’s still the Harrisonburg people know and love.”

“There is lots of room for density without impacting the historic character of the place.”

“Can Downtown be a place to test density bonuses to assist in developing mixed-income housing?”

- quotes from public engagement



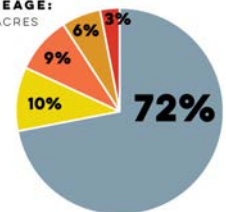
TAXABLE PROPERTIES

TAXABLE PARCELS

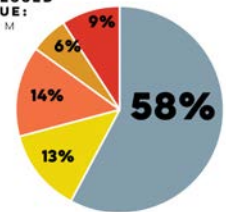
TAX EXEMPT PARCELS

- OTHER
- CITY
- RELIGIOUS
- JMU

ACREAGE:
214 ACRES



ASSESSED
VALUE:
\$494 M



0 1/8 1/4 Mile



Source: City of Harrisonburg

Market potential presents an opportunity for new residential development, which is good for businesses and good for tax revenue that, in turn, can support other Downtown improvements. Today, 28% of Downtown parcels are tax exempt, and with over 30% of Downtown’s parcel area dedicated to surface or structured parking, the existing taxable properties are often underused, which results in less tax revenue than if fully developed. Many have indicated that

properties are overvalued by owners, which limits development because of the high cost to purchase. This is why rehabilitation and the reuse of existing buildings have driven Downtown’s revitalization to date. Building reuse in Downtown accounts for the largest concentration of this activity in the City. The next step is to strategically redevelop empty and/or underused property to encourage more Downtown living and create more Downtown vibrancy.



Downtown also needs more visitors.

To better support Downtown businesses we need more customers. More residents in and near Downtown is one solution, but more visitors is another. Visitors are extremely important for the local economy. According to Harrisonburg Tourism and Visitor Services (HTVS) and the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC), in 2016, tourism revenue for Harrisonburg reached \$118,605,915, a 4% change over 2015.⁹ Tourism on its own supports over 1,100 jobs in the city, and the average spending per visitor in 2014 was \$260.¹⁰

Shenandoah National Park is only 24 miles from Court Square and attracted over 1,400,000 visitors in 2019 with an increase of 38.6% in 2020. The nearby George Washington and Jefferson National Forests attract over 1,750,000 per year. In the Shenandoah Valley region, tourism spending was up last year, from \$1.5 billion in 2018 to \$1.57 billion in 2019. These numbers are significant, and their impact is even larger when considering that Downtown visitors are often wealthier and more diverse with a median income 30% higher than households in the City.

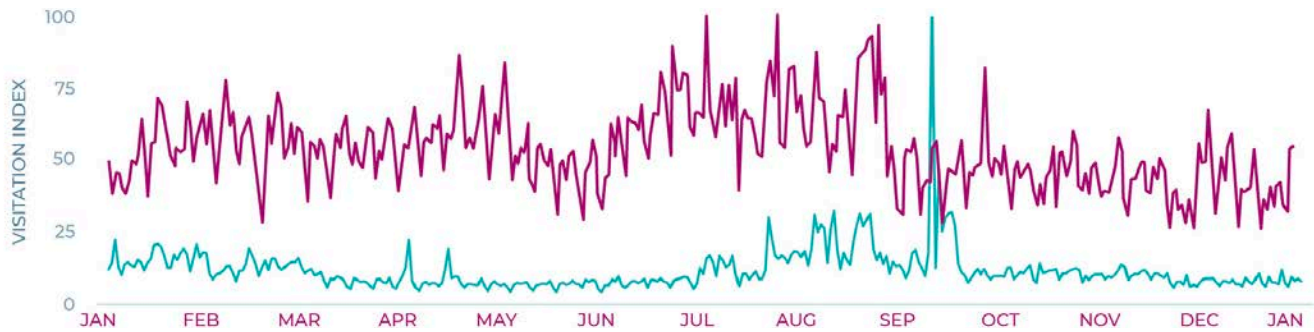
However, the pandemic crippled Downtown Harrisonburg, along with downtowns across the country both large and small. Visitation to Downtown Harrisonburg was 70%-80% lower in 2020 than in 2019. In 2019, visitors came from all over the northeast, but cell phone data indicate a substantial change in 2020 where the distribution of visitors shrank substantially. In 2020, 70% of Downtown visitors came from within a 5-mile radius -- a substantial change from pre-pandemic levels where 70% of visitors came from a broader swath of I-81 and the entire Shenandoah Valley. We need to create stronger ties to these nearby assets that are attracting visitors to help energize businesses in Downtown that have suffered during the past year and a half.

⁹ 2018 Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan

¹⁰ 2018 Harrisonburg Comprehensive Plan. Research indicates "Local tourism-supported jobs totaled 1,152 while local tourism-related taxes were \$9,722,194. The average (artisan) visitor spending in 2014 was \$260 per person, per day."

VISITATION OVER TIME

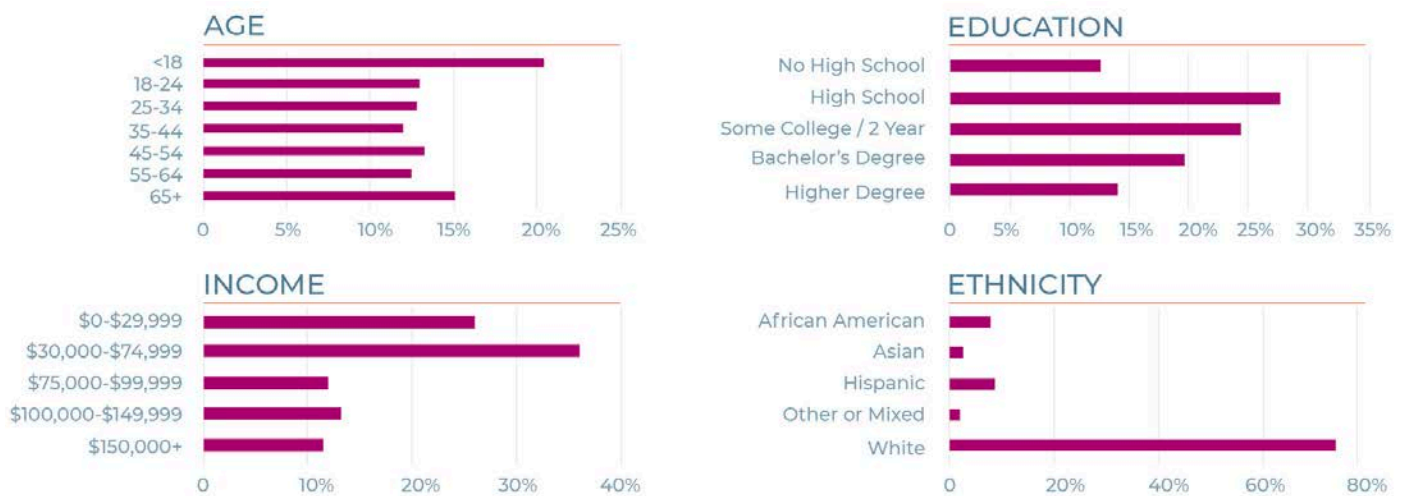
2019
2020



Source: Ubermedia cell phone location data

DOWNTOWN VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS - 2019

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME: \$63,800
MEDIAN HOME VALUE: \$247,600



Source: Ubermedia cell phone location data



"We need to explicitly invite and market Downtown to Harrisonburg residents too - people of different classes and colors who don't spend their time or money Downtown. We're not inviting out the local population with disposable incomes."

- quote from public engagement





We need to reconnect Downtown.

Downtowns across the country benefit from their connection to surrounding communities and the broader region. This is true, in part, for Downtown Harrisonburg, as a network of highways and rail lines were designed to connect Downtown to the region and beyond.

There are just too many gaps that make Downtown feel emptier than it really is. Sometimes these gaps are created by major streets and sometimes, the gaps are caused by undeveloped property or parking lots. Downtown has 69 acres of parking (surface area), which equals about 32% of all of the Downtown parcel-areas. Opinions differ on how best to use this land. On one hand, some think that Downtown needs more parking to be competitive, but others argue that focusing on parking ends up creating problems of its own, resulting in dead spaces where garages and surface lots front the street. Surface parking is a byproduct of how Downtown has

evolved, relying on cars to bring in customers. This means we have to dedicate space for cars and parking, which contributes to limited opportunities to build new housing and, in turn, fewer Downtown businesses.

Beyond parking lots, the streets act as dividers in many locations. Downtown is walkable, but the walking experience is not always pleasant - or comfortable. High and Mason streets are large thoroughfares designed to carry traffic, and both Liberty and Main streets act as highway bypass routes when problems occur on I-81, which causes the City to limit the number of street closures for events along the corridor. Though Main and Liberty are the two primary streets framing the heart of Downtown, due to their design, they feel like dividing lines. The 2020 Operations Study indicates that based on traffic counts, there are opportunities to reimagine the future of these critical corridors.



“There are gaps in the teeth - it’s always been the issue with Downtown.”

“The gigantic semi-trucks are an issue for pedestrians. They are noisy and intimidating.”

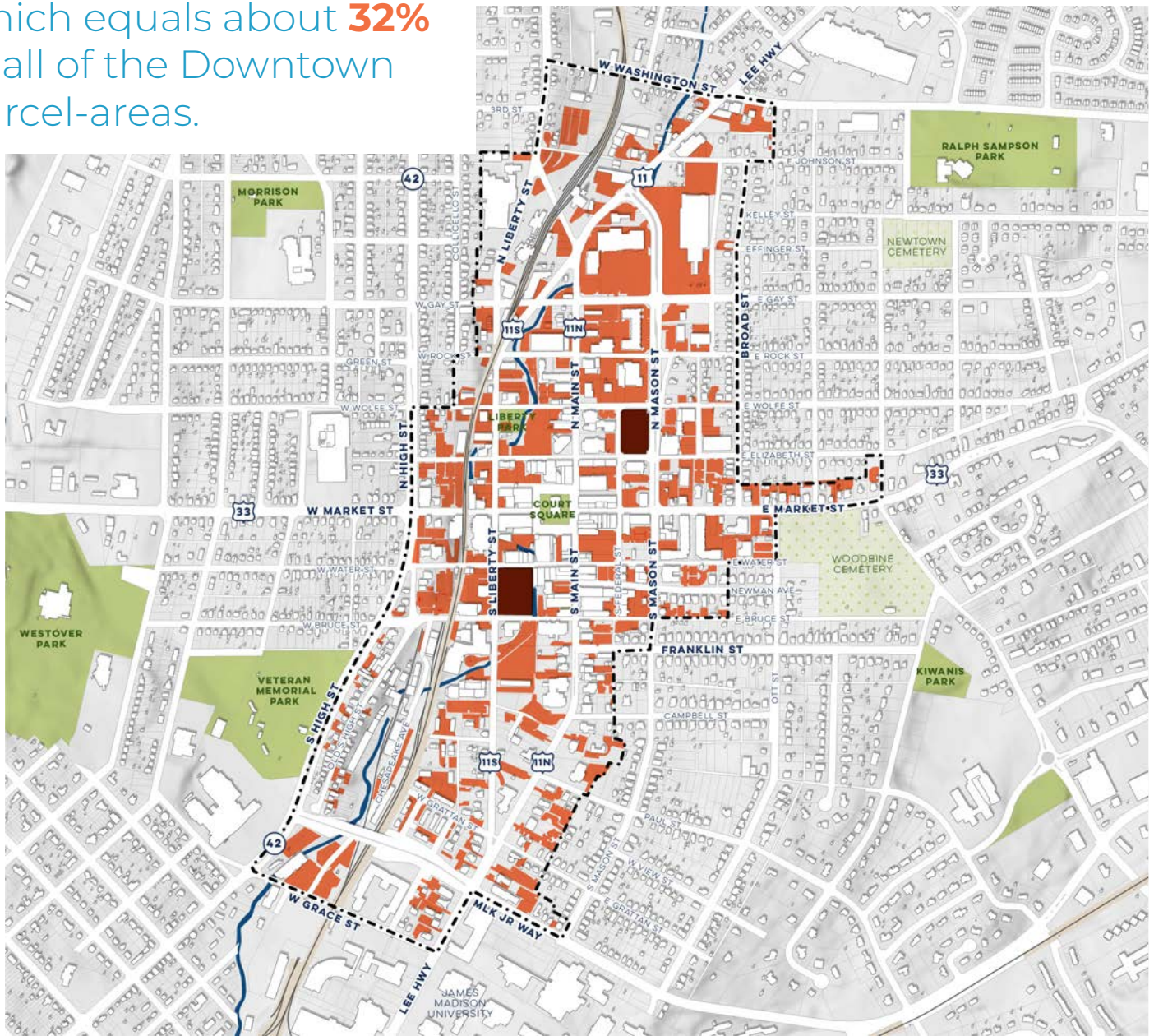
“Walking around can be very difficult. Some streets have a three-foot sidewalk... with telephone poles in the middle.”

- quotes from public engagement



Downtown has **69 acres of parking** (surface area), which equals about **32%** of all of the Downtown parcel-areas.

PARKING



- STUDY AREA
- SURFACE PARKING
- PARKING STRUCTURE



Source: City of Harrisonburg

The most consistent call for change on the Downtown 2040 collaborative map was for **street improvements** that would **improve the pedestrian and cyclist experience.**



Downtown needs more activity.

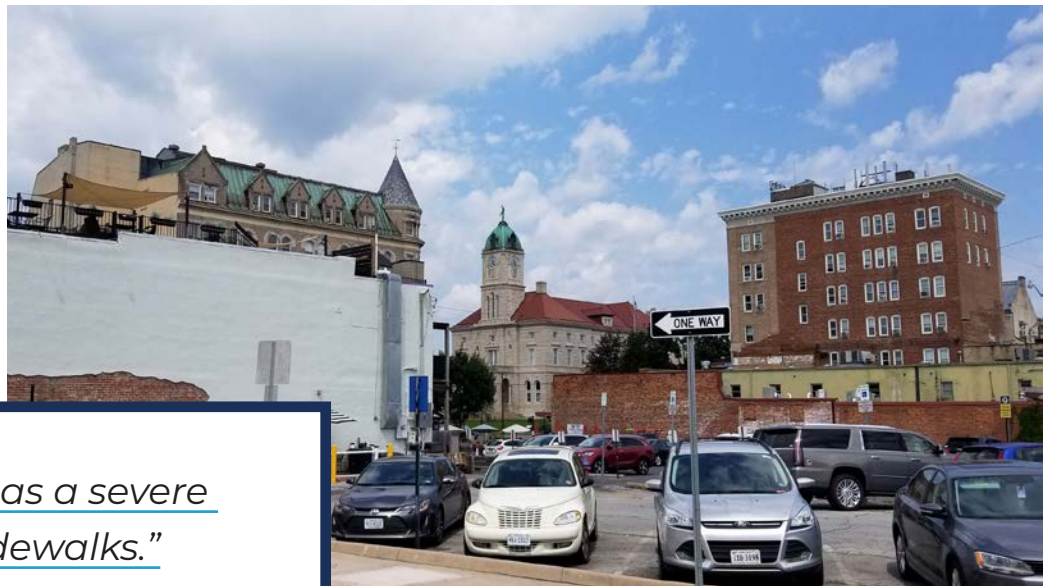
The quality of the pedestrian experience can be quantified and mapped to better understand the challenges and fine-tune targeted solutions. The planning team analyzed the “street frontage” of every block and building Downtown. An “excellent” frontage includes an active ground floor use, windows, and a door. An “unfavorable” frontage is empty, a parking lot or blank wall.

This analysis shows that while there are some concentrated areas of favorable streetscapes, the majority of Downtown’s streetscapes (67%) are unfavorable, a category that includes parking garages and lots, blank windowless walls, and long expanses of reflective glass without entrances. We cannot fix this issue with new retail alone due to the scale of the problem. More activities are needed to fill these gaps and attract more employees and businesses to Downtown.



*Above:
Active storefronts
are concentrated
on a few streets
Downtown.*

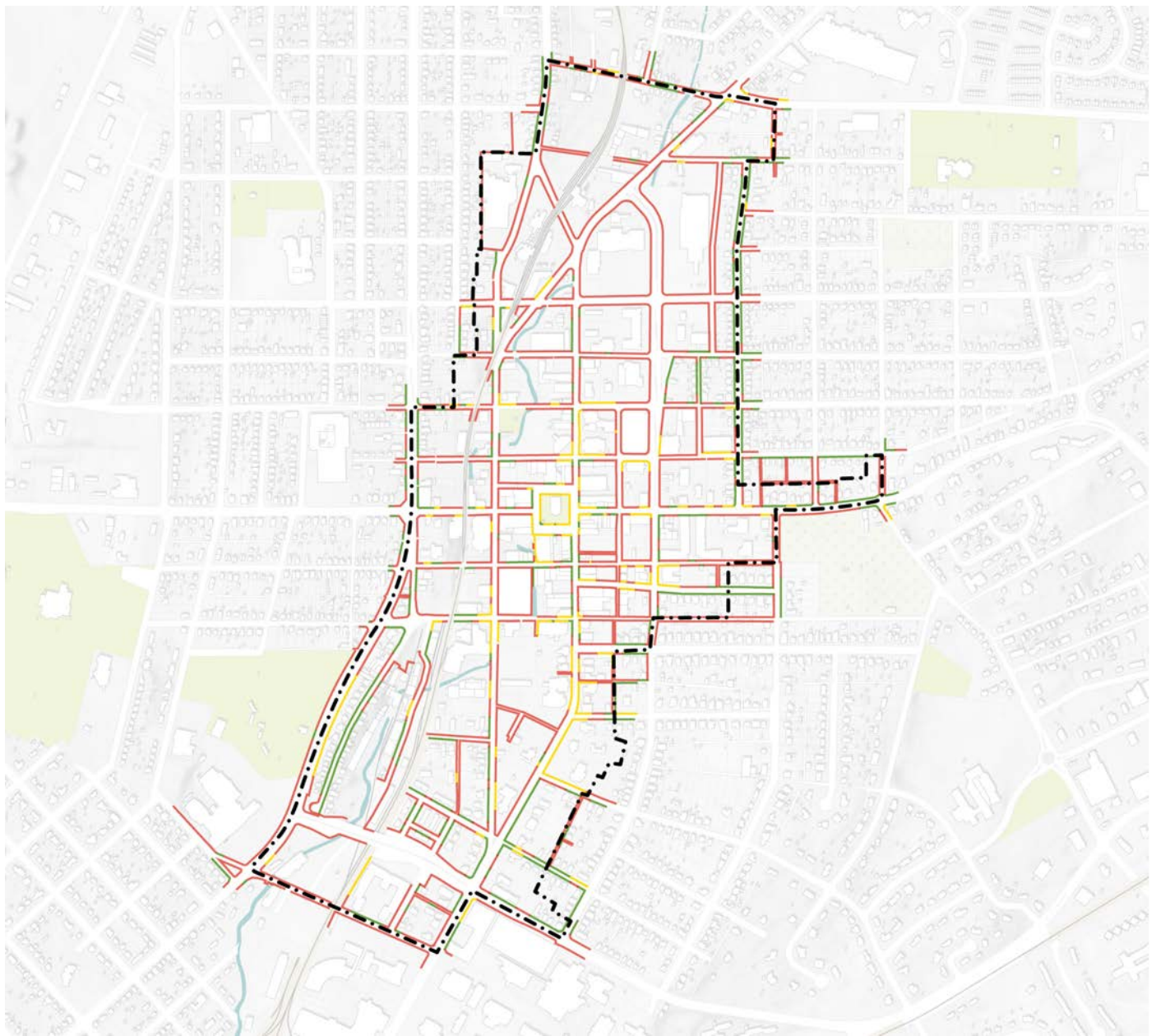
*Below:
Large swaths of
Downtown have inactive
streets due to land uses
like surface parking lots.*



*“Harrisonburg has a severe
lack of active sidewalks.”*

- quote from public engagement

ACTIVE / INACTIVE FRONTAGES



- STUDY AREA
- ACTIVE
- SOMEWHAT INACTIVE
- INACTIVE

0 1/8 1/4 Mile



Source: Field Survey by HDR Intern, Nicole Allen, and Interface Studio

The majority of Downtown's streetscapes **(67%) are inactive**, a category that includes parking garages and lots, blank windowless walls, and long expanses of reflective glass without entrances.

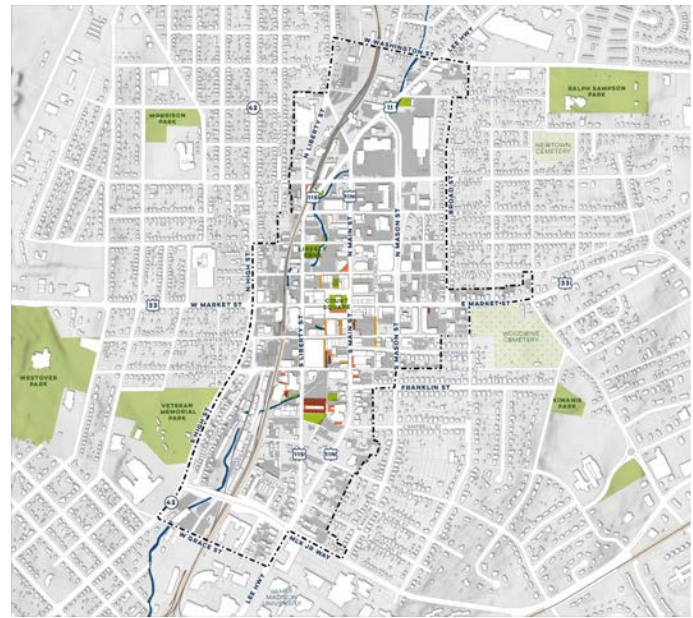


Downtowns often thrive when people can gather, but Harrisonburg has few opportunities to do so.

Less than 1% of the Downtown area is used for green space. The only existing park spaces include Court Square, Liberty Park at West Wolfe and Liberty streets, and Denton Park on Main Street. While protests sometimes occur around Court Square, neither space is big or flexible enough to accommodate larger events or provide a greater range of day-to-day activities. So many Downtowns have transformed on the heels of creating a new park that acts as the central hub for bringing people of all backgrounds together. This is what underpins the movement to create a new park in Downtown that can accomplish many of these goals.

But Downtown lacks greenery as well. Tree coverage is limited, which means that Downtown lacks shade and is hotter than other parts of the City during summer months. Blacks Run has been polluted and partially covered. Where it is visible, it is sometimes a hidden gem - a glimpse of nature right in Downtown - while at other times overgrowth obscures the waterway. There is real potential to restore and celebrate this historic stream, reconnecting people with nature and improving spaces along its edges to help better connect Downtown.

OPEN SPACE



- STUDY AREA
- CITY PARKS/OPEN SPACE
- CEMETERY
- PARKING LOTS
- DOWNTOWN PARK/OPEN SPACE
- PLAZA
- PARKING LOT PLAZA
- ALLEY/SHARED STREET
- ARCADE

Source: Field Survey by Merritt Chase



“Harrisonburg is a tight-knit community with a collegial atmosphere - it’s friendly, with deep interconnections between groups. It’s the right size. Not solely a collegetown, but also a family town and a retirement community - all rolled into one - that makes it unique.”

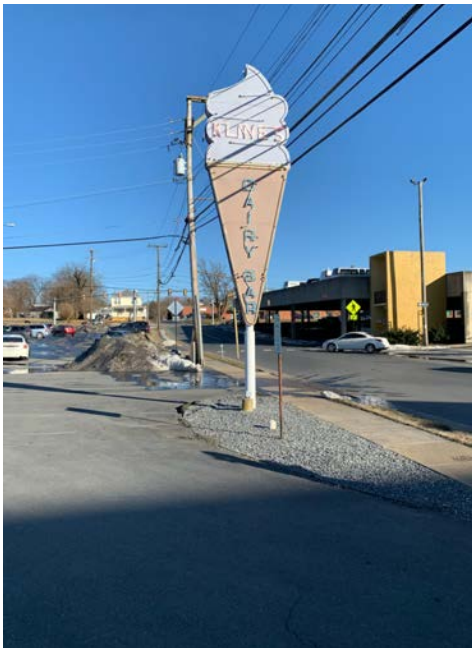
- quote from public engagement





“Harrisonburg is kind of weird. It’s part of the draw.”

- quote from public engagement



Various images depicting the eclectic nature of Downtown Harrisonburg.



Despite these challenges, Downtown is quirky and beloved - the heartbeat of the community - with much to build upon.

In fact, the community’s collective vision for the future and the recommendations that follow are as much a call for change as they are a doubling-down on the characteristics that make Downtown, Downtown.



Vision

Over the next twenty years, Downtown Harrisonburg will continue to rebuild and grow while retaining its **home town feel** so that residents and visitors alike can enjoy **all that a city has to offer** coupled with the **heart and soul of a small town.**

As the **heart of the Friendly City**, Downtown will **welcome new residents**, and as the **heartbeat of the Shenandoah Valley**, it will grow and **support the local and regional business ecosystem.**

To ease growing pains, Downtown will **coordinate new development** with **investments in infrastructure** (such as sidewalks, parking, green infrastructure, and sustainable technology) to support new growth, and to **maintain our sense of place**, we'll **uncover hidden narratives**, share our rich history, and preserve elements of our **quirky character.**

Downtown will **celebrate the outdoors** and **beauty of the city and region**, by **getting people out of their cars** and **exploring Downtown at slower speeds**

- Walking and biking along streets that are **active, green, safe, and punctuated with public art**
- Meandering along **lesser-known paths** that connect different destinations
- Enjoying Downtown as a **departure point for exploring** new trails in the region and **new parks and natural features** within Downtown itself
- And absorbing **stories from the past**, beginning with the Native American people who originally settled here

We will **work together** as neighbors, colleagues, and friends to deepen our **shared sense of community**, ensuring that Downtown is a place where there's **something for everyone** and **everyone belongs** - people of all ages, different races and ethnicities, with different cultures, languages, and religions, students, families... Not just friendly, but **intentionally inclusive**, with **equitable opportunities**.

Downtown is **where we come together as a community, where connections are made**, and a central driving force for our collective future.



All the words in bold came directly from the community.

10 Key Ideas / 20 Action Steps for Downtown

CONNECT TO THE REGION'S BEAUTY

EXPAND THE NETWORK OF "OFF-MENU" PATHS

CREATE NEW OPEN SPACES THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

REDESIGN MAIN & LIBERTY TO SERVE DOWNTOWN AS A DESTINATION

SHOWCASE DOWNTOWN'S HISTORY & IDENTITY IN THE STREETScape

Downtown 2040 has 20 recommendations or action steps for Downtown Harrisonburg, organized by 10 key goals or overarching ideas that emerged from the community's input throughout the process.

ANIMATE THE PUBLIC REALM WITH PROGRAMMING

DIVERSIFY DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

GROW DOWNTOWN AS A NEIGHBORHOOD

INTEGRATE DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

MAKE IT HAPPEN!

Connect to the Region's Beauty

ACTION ITEMS:

01 –

Extend regional trails to and through
Downtown

02 –

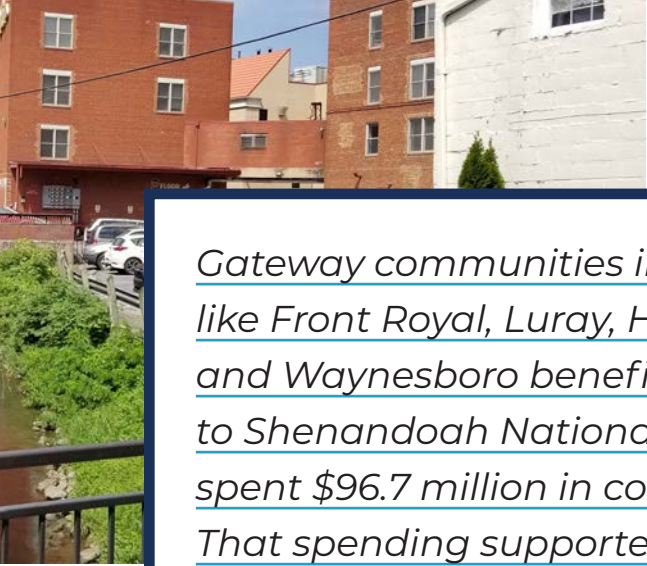
Provide a sense of arrival with art &
plantings



*Natural beauty is prevalent throughout
Downtown and the Region.*

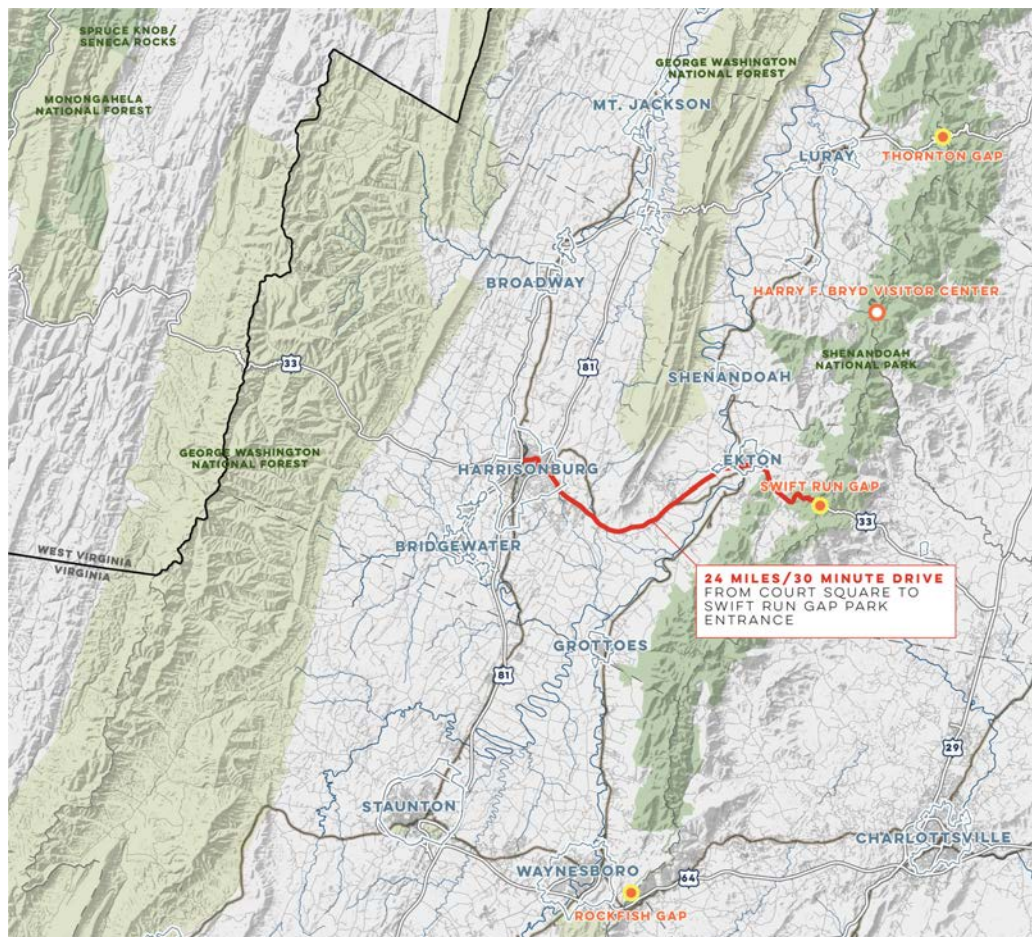
Shenandoah National Park and the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests are at Downtown's doorstep. Downtown needs to be an integral part of the experience for visitors attracted to the beautiful amenities in the region.

Shenandoah National Park saw **1.425 million** visitors in 2019.



Gateway communities in the Shenandoah Valley like Front Royal, Luray, Harrisonburg, Staunton, and Waynesboro benefit broadly from visitation to Shenandoah National Park. In 2019, travelers spent \$96.7 million in communities near the park. That spending supported 1,190 jobs in the local area and had a cumulative benefit to the local economy of \$129 million.¹¹

¹¹ <https://visitshenandoah.org/press-release/shenandoah-valley-tourism-organization-aims-to-keep-bringing-in-visitors/>



NATIONAL PARK ACCESS

- NATIONAL PARK VISITOR CENTER
- NATIONAL PARK ENTRANCE
- NATIONAL FOREST
- NATIONAL PARK/RECREATION

SOURCE:
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

0 2.5 5 10 Miles



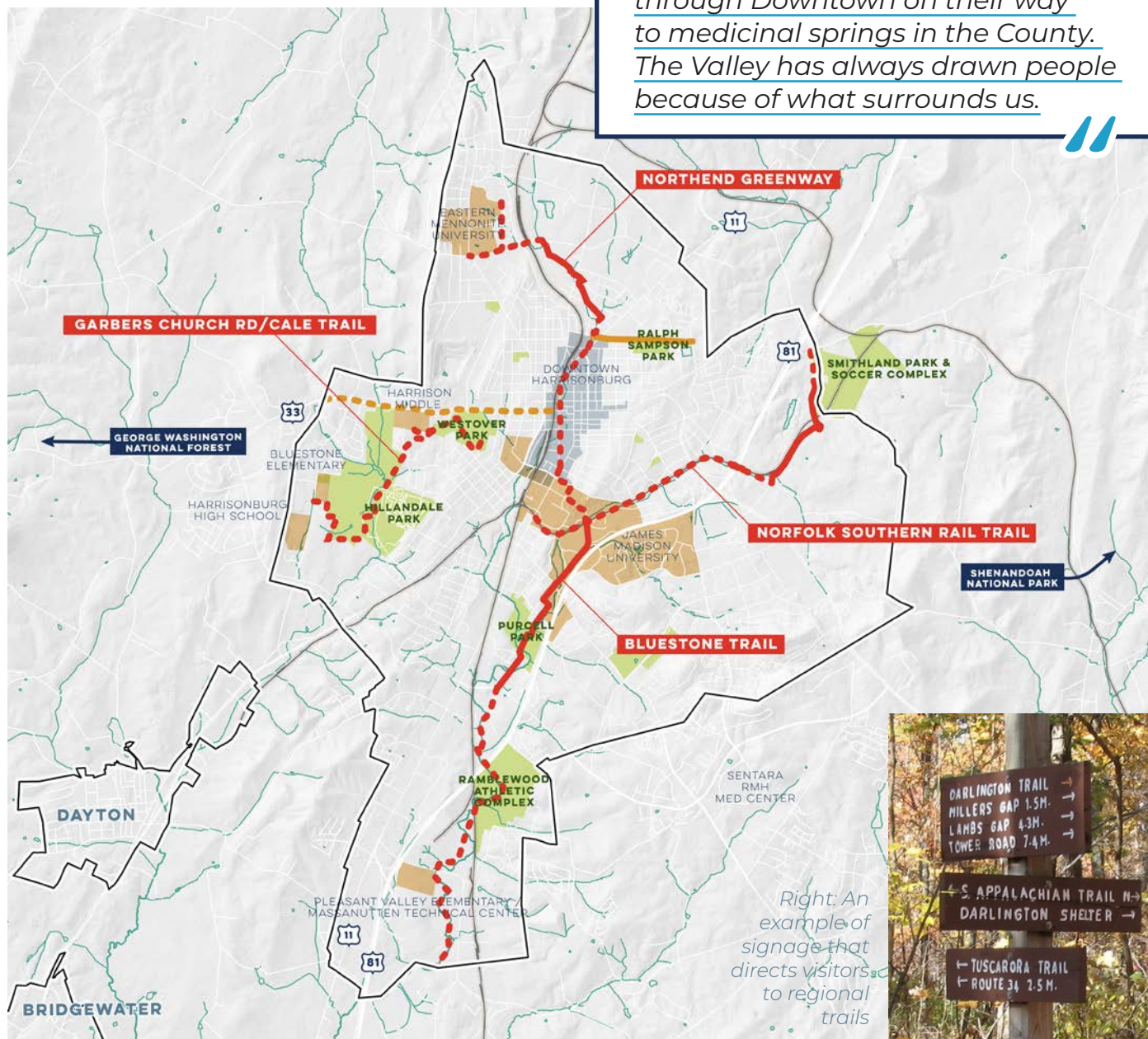
- quote from public engagement



It used to be that people would ride wagon roads and come through Downtown on their way to medicinal springs in the County. The Valley has always drawn people because of what surrounds us.



CITYWIDE TRAIL MAP



Right: An example of signage that directs visitors to regional trails

- EXISTING SHARED USE TRAIL
- EXISTING BIKE LANE
- - - PROPOSED SHARED USE TRAIL
- - - PROPOSED BIKE LANE



01

Extend regional trails to and through Downtown

There are portions of existing trails that extend through the City in all directions. The Northend Greenway, Norfolk Southern Rail Trail, Bluestone Trail, and the Friendly City Trail / Cale Trail all help to connect amenities in different portions of the City. Downtown should be a hub for trail access, providing an urban

trail system for those looking to explore the area on foot or by bicycle. Extend these trails through Downtown, and clearly promote and physically mark these routes. Later, evaluate future extensions to the entrances to the National Park and National Forests.

“The arts can drive tourism and generate revenue!”

- quote from public engagement



02

Provide a sense of arrival with art & plantings

Make a statement for visitors that might not know a lot about Harrisonburg and its Downtown. In addition to programming like the Traipse Downtown scavenger hunt and the Downton Arts Walk, ensure that the gateways to Downtown are welcoming, visible and creative. This includes two early actions:

A

Install a large-scale mural on the feed mill - This is the most visible structure in the City. Make a statement, and lure visitors to town.

B

Plant native wildflowers along key corridors entering the Downtown - This activity will soften Downtown’s gateways and echo the natural beauty of the region. To start, develop a palette or local seed mix along with planting guidelines that suggest timing, soil preparation, and dimensions. Plant along Mason’s median, East Market Street, on the eastern edge of Court Square, and on Main Street near City Hall. Recruit participation by private parties whose properties flank Liberty and Main entering Downtown as well.

Existing Feed Mill



Murals on large-scale agricultural infrastructure



Would love to see some grant money go towards a beautiful mural on the poultry tower that captures the spirit of the city. Could turn this structure into a badge of pride for locals, and an easily recognizable landmark for visitors.

- quote from public engagement



Expand the Network of "Off-Menu" Paths

ACTION ITEMS:

03 -

Build out from the existing pedestrian crossroads at Water Street & Blacks Run

04 -

Restore the health and presence of Blacks Run as a place for people in addition to flora and fauna

05 -

Evolve Federal Street as a shared street, designed for people first, but providing vehicular access as needed

One of Harrisonburg's most unique features is the existing network of small pathways that wind between buildings and sometimes along Blacks Run. This is a feature few other cities can offer. One resident referred to this network as an "off menu" view of Harrisonburg. Celebrate and improve these spaces to provide the pedestrian-only environment many have asked for in this process.

03

Build out from the existing pedestrian crossroads at Water Street & Blacks Run

The bones are in place with existing pathways stretching along the Water Street deck, across Water Street and north toward Court Square. Integrate art, signage and programming to celebrate this passageway.

A

Infuse these spaces with art, color, lighting, and plantings - There are great examples of this type of activity using both inexpensive and temporary improvements as well as installing more permanent amenities. Consider a design competition with local talent to develop an improvement plan for implementation in year one.

B

Install wayfinding at a smaller scale - The pathways wind through a unique and historic portion of Downtown. Design and install wayfinding for all visitors that help to direct and tell the story of Downtown.



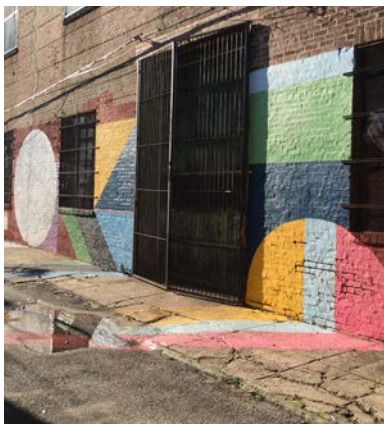
“The off-menu walking tour is what is unique about Downtown.”

“The pedestrian alley that continues to Bruce is awesome. I’d love to see more pedestrian-only areas like this.”

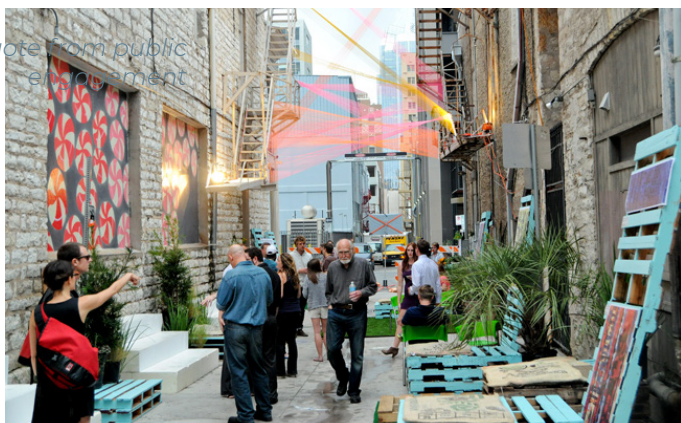
- quotes from public engagement

Above: The existing “Off-Menu Path” found Downtown.

Below: Art and wayfinding examples



- quote from public engagement





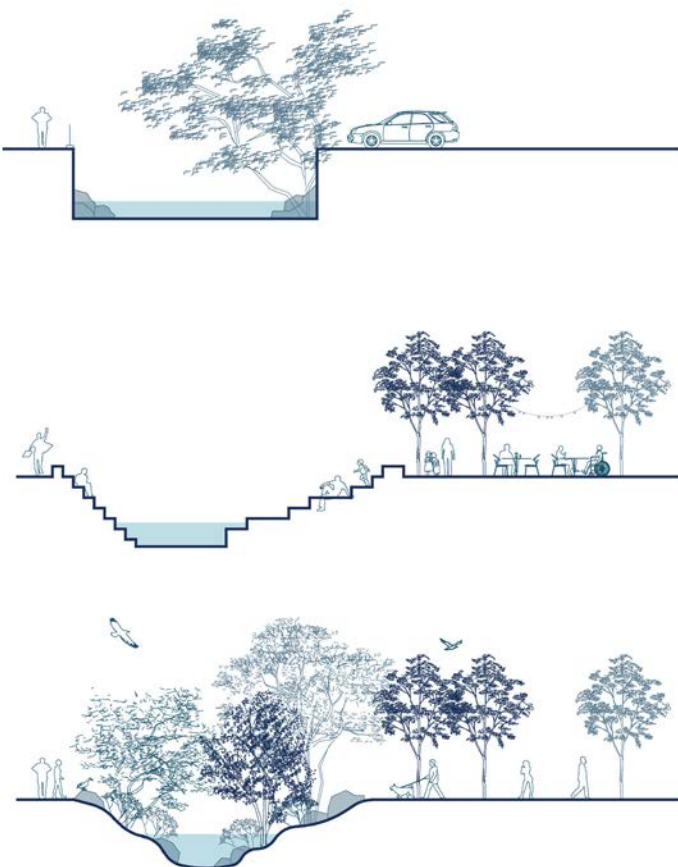
An example of an interpretive path/trail in Toronto, ON
Source: www.landezine.com

04

Restore the health and presence of Blacks Run as a place for people in addition to flora and fauna

Blacks Run is a historic stream that serves as infrastructure in managing stormwater, though runoff from nearby industrial land uses and surface parking lots threatens water quality. The waterway has largely been squeezed into a culvert, sometimes covered, and sometimes visible. Its location winds through Downtown and has long shaped development

patterns. Blacks Run has captured public imagination, and people know this unique feature in Downtown could be so much more. Redesign Blacks Run as an amenity that reinforces new development and existing uses. Design opportunities to increase greenery and habitat Downtown and provide new gathering spaces.



Left:
Examples of different conditions along Blacks Run

A

Cull invasive species - In many locations, Blacks Run is overrun with invasive species that hide it. Commission an ecologist or arborist to survey existing plant species, water quality, and infrastructure, and then work to remove invasive species to make way for native plantings that add real value Downtown.

B

Create more moments to celebrate nature and bring people together along a trail that traverses natural and urban conditions - Design Blacks Run as an integrated trail system that offers different experiences for visitors - opportunities to be in nature and opportunities to enjoy the activity of the City.

NETWORK OF OFF-MENU PATHS



- STUDY AREA
- NATURE TRAIL (PROPOSED)
- ... URBAN TRAIL (PROPOSED)
- EXISTING URBAN TRAIL
- ... HISTORIC STREETS
- ↔ KEY STREET CONNECTIONS
- - - PROPOSED SHARED USE TRAIL
- FEDERAL ST SHARED USE PATH
- DAYLIGHT BLACKS RUN, ADD / ENHANCE PARK SPACE & LANDSCAPE



Make Blacks Run a riverwalk park throughout Downtown.

- quote from public engagement



Left:
Interim
investments
on Federal
Street

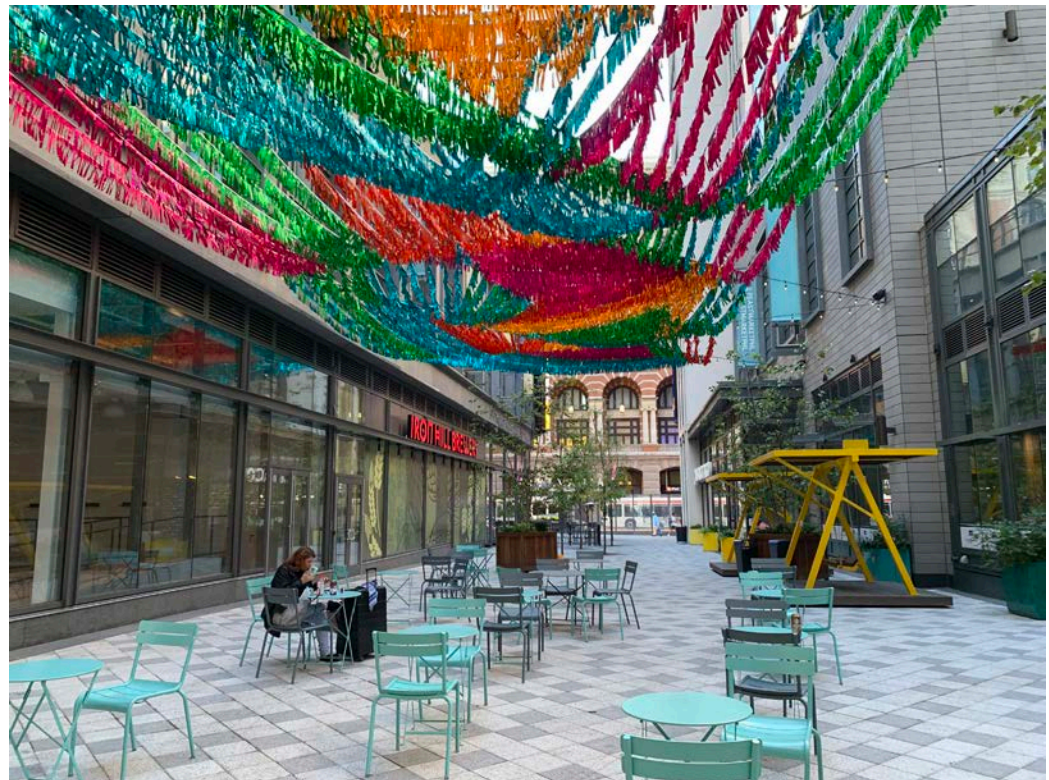
05

Evolve Federal Street as a shared street, designed for people first, but providing vehicular access as needed

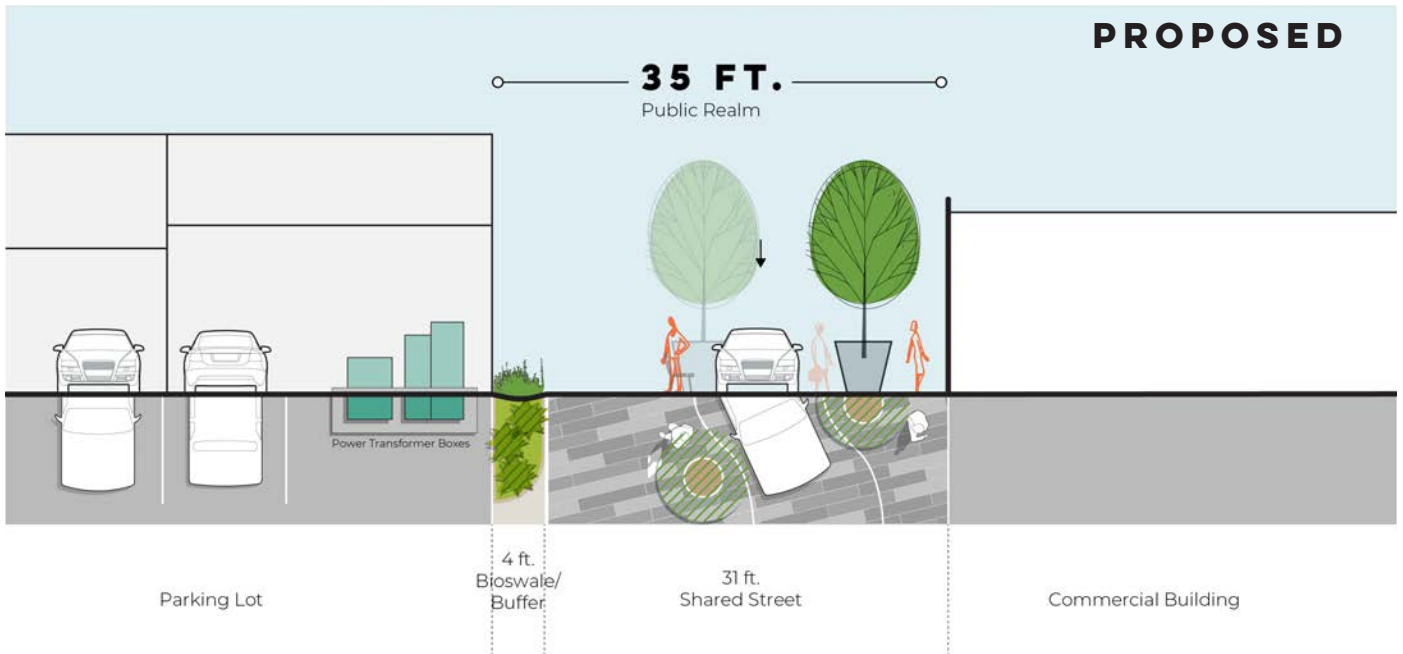
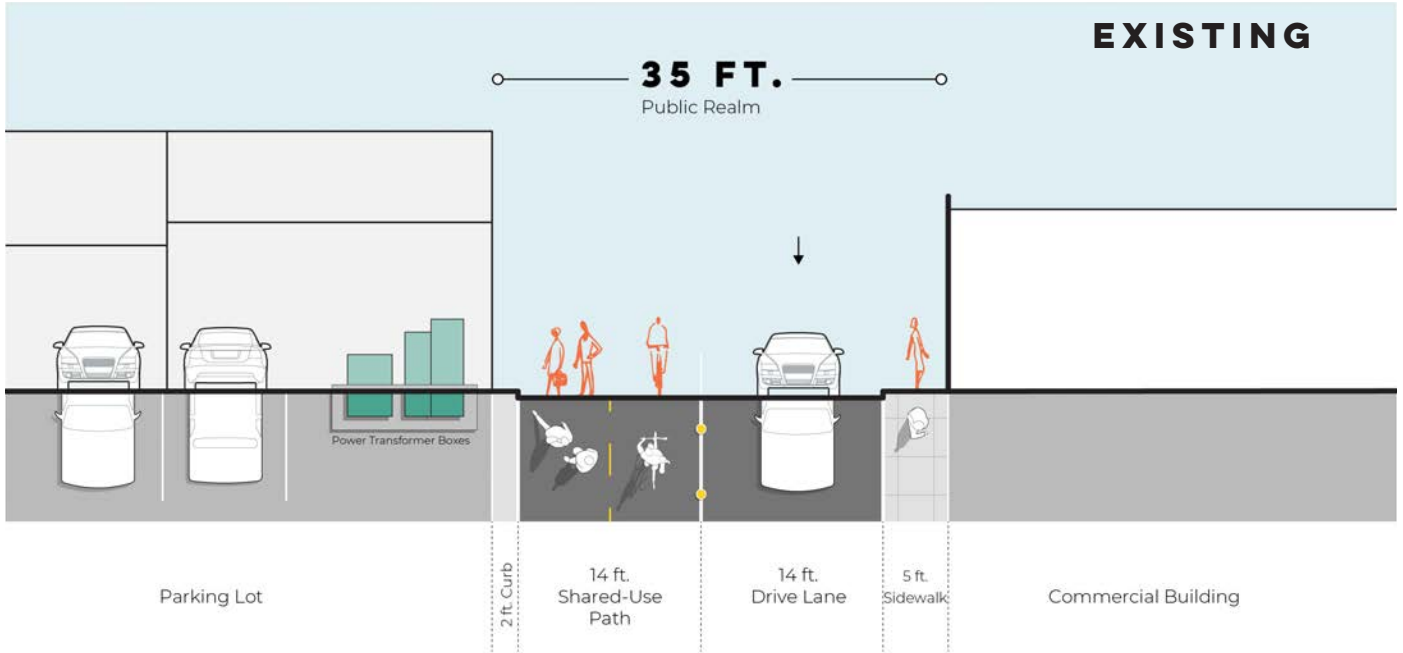
Federal Street has long been viewed as an opportunity to provide a safe space for walking and bicycling precisely because it does not carry a lot of traffic compared to nearby Main Street. To date, a separated two-way shared use path has been installed for a few blocks to demonstrate the potential of the street. Build upon this vision by designing a true shared street that provides safe spaces for

people while continuing to allow access by cars. A shared street is designed to look and function more like a plaza but one that allows access for bicycles and cars at slow, safe speeds. Target the area south of Wolfe Street toward Franklin Street where this kind of an improvement can serve as an amenity for potential new development.

Right:
An example
of a shared
street in
Philadelphia,
PA



FEDERAL STREET SECTIONS





Create New Open Spaces that Bring People Together

ACTION ITEMS:

06 -
Activate Court Square

07 -
Build a destination Downtown park
to serve all ages and a range of
programming

Downtown has very few open spaces and none well suited for day-to-day or temporary programming. Less than 1% of space is dedicated to parks in Downtown. Where do people gather Downtown? Where can people meet and enjoy the company of neighbors, family, and friends? Where will Downtown welcome visitors? Improving spaces along Blacks Run can make a big impact, but the Downtown community still needs park spaces that can be programmed for small and large events.



06

Activate Court Square

Court Square is the City's historic center yet the open spaces around the courthouse are underutilized. Most of Downtown's current activity takes place south and north of Court Square. With expansion plans in the works, this is an opportunity to reimagine Court Square. As on-site expansion of the Court House moves forward, be mindful of the ways in which the building meets Main Street.



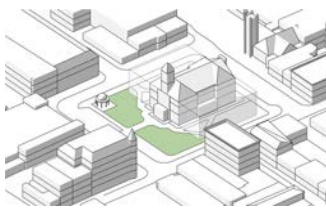
*Bring back Fridays
on Court Square with
music and dance!*

- quote from public engagement





Left:
Existing Court Square.



Graphic depicting the potential additions to the Court House

Example showing potential improvements to the Court Square lawn



A Activate the frontage of the expansion with community-facing design and program elements - As on-site expansion of the Court House moves forward, be mindful of the ways in which the building meets Main Street, seeking opportunities to help bridge the current gap in active frontages that currently causes pedestrian traffic to trail off. Integrate windows in the ground floor and, if possible, publicly-accessible and community-serving spaces that both invite people in and/or encourage them to spend time outside. Ideas include gallery space for historical exhibits as well as a small retail component with outdoor seating that could become a lunch-time destination. Coordinate with HDR's Design Committee as a resource during the design phase of the building expansion.

Above:
Potential improved Court Square south lawn, sidewalk, and street. Rendering by Merritt Chase

B Improve the south lawn, sidewalk, and street to accommodate events and programming (both formal and informal) - Redesign the south lawn and the street to allow for temporary closures for programmed events. These events would help support Main Street businesses.



Above: Potential view of a new destination Park Downtown
 Rendering by Merritt Chase



07

Build a destination Downtown park to serve all ages and a range of programming

It has long been recognized that Downtown needs a signature park space. Since 2015, there have been formal plans developed to move this idea forward. Focused on the area around the Farmers Market, the goal of the park is to provide flexible space for small and large events, gardening, and play space to bring more family attractions to Downtown. With the development of the Ice House across Liberty Street, this is an excellent opportunity to advance this idea.

“Downtown Harrisonburg is not set up for people to mingle and be together... we don’t have a place where informal relationship building can happen regardless of class and culture.”

- quote from public engagement

A Design one large park with the potential to daylight Blacks Run and host a playground and event space - Focus on the area north of the Farmers Market to enable the park to serve as a hinge that connects the Ice House in the south with the alley and Water Street to the north. As with previous designs, provide space for a playground, lawn, flexible event space (including storage and restrooms) and a learning garden. Consider a street mural on Liberty Street to visibly connect this new park with the entrance to the Ice House as well as the continuation of Blacks Run and adjacent public spaces in either direction. Evaluate the feasibility and renewable energy potential of adding solar panels to Turner Pavilion as well as any new buildings in the park.

Conceptual design and programming for:

POTENTIAL DESTINATION PARK



B

Extend the street grid and create strong urban park edges - Integrate clear accessways for cars and delivery trucks to serve the park and adjacent uses. Extend a road with on-street parking south from Bruce Street to connect with Warren Street. Create a new road on the south side of the Farmers Market to establish a grid of streets that will help to better connect this space to Downtown and surrounding amenities. Plant the edges with street trees that help frame the new park and make it feel woven into the fabric of Downtown.

“We’d love to have something more natural and open-ended, where kids can use their imagination to play.”

“There are too many one-and-done trips to Downtown. How can we get people to stay longer?”

Redesign Main & Liberty to Serve Downtown as a Destination

ACTION ITEMS:

08 -

Divert truck traffic away from Main Street

09 -

Remove one vehicular travel lane from Main Street and replace with a widened sidewalk

10 -

Repurpose one travel lane on Liberty Street for cyclists instead of drivers

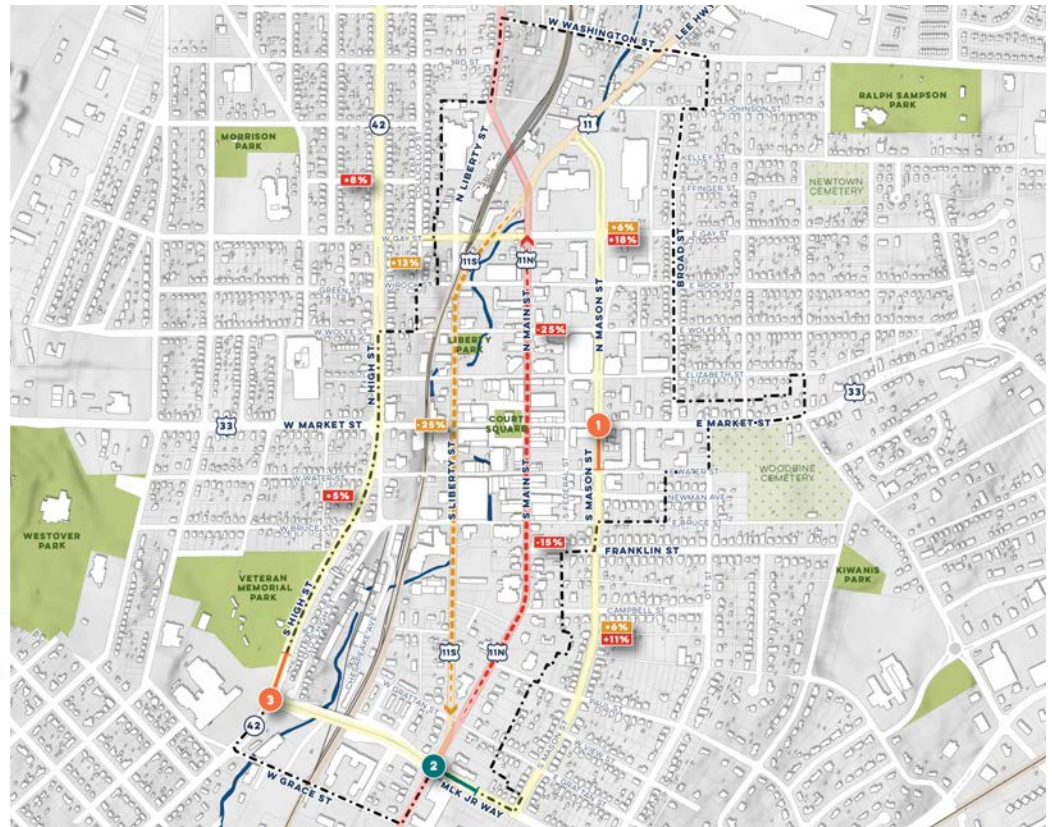


Above: Trucks along Main Street.

Main and Liberty Streets are the primary front doors to Downtown. They should aspire to the highest standards in design, as they reflect the first impression visitors have of Downtown. Liberty is a loud, fast moving street with a flurry of new development in pockets on the south and north sides of Downtown. Main Street offers some historic buildings and unique amenities including Massanutten Regional library, Explore More Discovery Museum, and the Agora Downtown Market to name a few. It functions, however, largely as a northbound through-route for cars and trucks, and serves as a bypass when I-81 is backed up. Sidewalks are very narrow, and there are few trees and other amenities to serve residents, shoppers and visitors. A former streetscape study and the more recent Operations Study from 2020 reveal that these streets can be designed differently without negatively impacting access to Downtown.



OPERATIONS STUDY



- 1 MASON ST/E MARKET ST**
CONVERT NORTH-BOUND
APPROACH TO 2 LANES
- 2 S MAIN ST/MLK JR WAY**
CONVERT LEFT-THROUGH
LANE TO THROUGH-ONLY
- 3 S HIGH ST/MLK JR WAY**
EXTEND SOUTHBOUND
LEFT-TURN STORAGE BAY
- NB MAIN ST (ONE-WAY)**
LANE RECONFIGURATION RESULTING
IN ONE THROUGH LANE ONLY
- SB LIBERTY ST (ONE-WAY)**
LANE RECONFIGURATION RESULTING
IN ONE THROUGH LANE ONLY
- +15%**
TRAFFIC VOLUME
PROPOSED NB MAIN ST
VOLUME RE-ROUTING
- +12%**
TRAFFIC VOLUME
PROPOSED SB LIBERTY ST
VOLUME RE-ROUTING

08

Divert truck traffic away from Main Street

"In our vision, we don't have to have through trucks. Our vision is a more bikeable, walkable downtown with slower cars."

- quote from public engagement

One of the more common complaints of Downtown offered during public input sessions was that of, "Too many trucks!" The abundance of truck traffic was noted by users as presenting a nuisance for noise and safety. While outright restriction of truck traffic on Liberty Street and Main Street is problematic, in part due to the delivery and shipping needs of Downtown businesses, reduction of unnecessary truck through-traffic should be a goal of the City.

Limiting this traffic through non-restrictive means will likely occur with the lane removals discussed in the sections below, as they will encourage greater use of alternative north-south traffic routes including High Street, Mason Street, and Interstate 81. Further, transformation of

Liberty Street and Main Street following repurposing of the lane reductions will reinforce their bicycle and pedestrian focus, and deter their use for purely vehicular pass through traffic.

The City should continue to explore additional means of truck traffic reduction in the years to come, beyond those that occur more organically alongside bicycle- and pedestrian-focused improvements. Doing so will help foster an environment most suitable for long-term, desirable growth Downtown.

Only **10%** of public outreach participants expressed a desire to keep Main Street as it is.

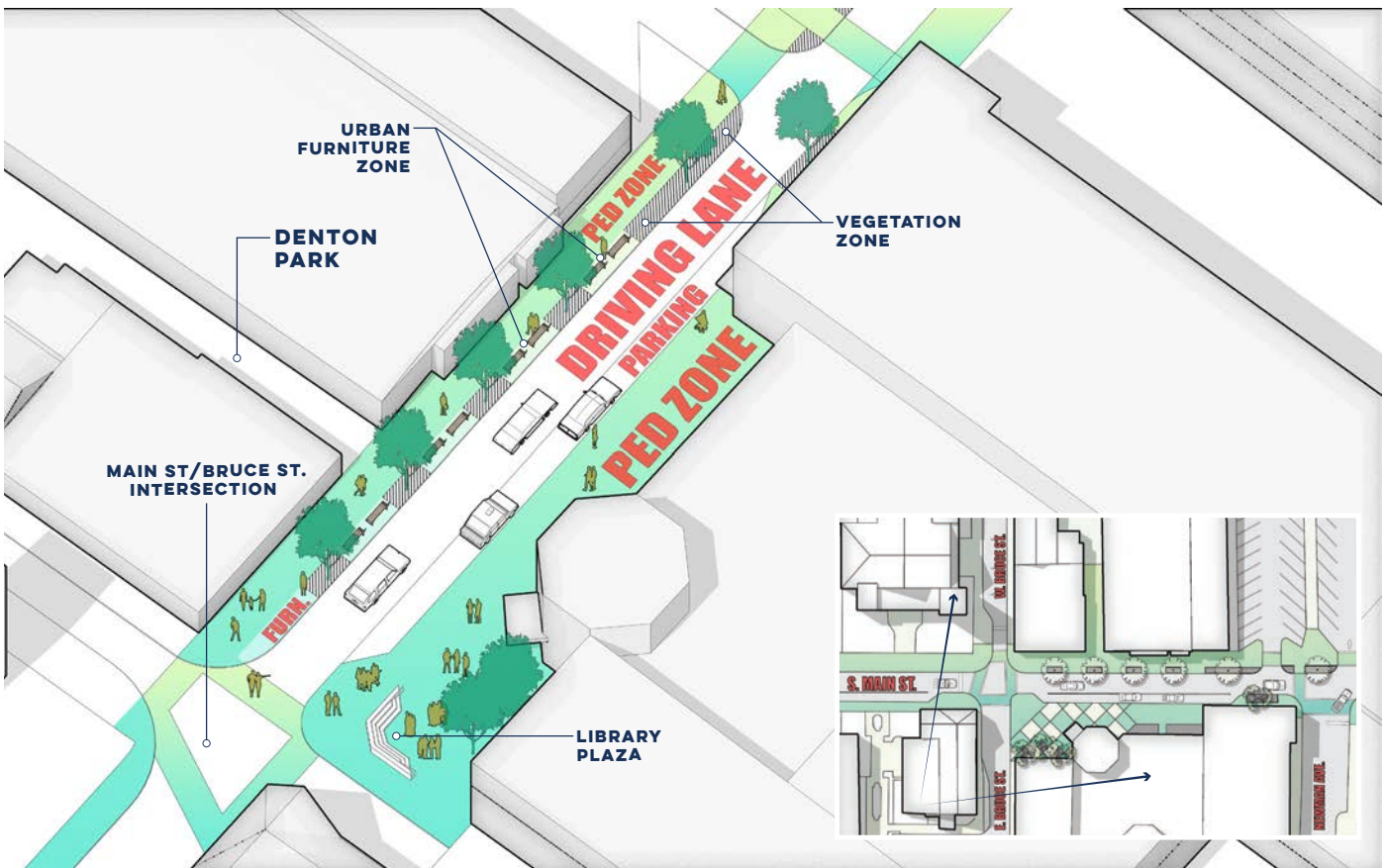


09
 Remove one vehicular travel lane from Main Street and replace with a widened sidewalk

A previous study indicated that Main Street can be redesigned with one less travel lane. This provides a significant opportunity to design more spaces for people, trees and amenities like seating and other street furniture. Only 10% of participants in the public outreach for this plan expressed a desire to keep Main Street as it is. The rest want to see real change in the look and feel of Main Street.

Above:
 An existing photo of Main Street.

Below:
 Potential for driving lane to be converted to pedestrian space on Main Street.
 Rendering by Monteverde Engineering & Design





Above:
Potential Main Street
with one lane of traffic
converted to pedestrian
space.
Rendering by Interface
Studio and Merritt Chase

A Retain the bump-outs and curbside drop-offs on the east side - This side of Main has already been improved, and there is little reason to change this design as it would cost a substantial amount of money with little benefit to do so.

B Extend the sidewalk on the west side of the street to create more space for pedestrians - The west side of Main Street is the opportunity to create a better front door by greatly extending the sidewalk and providing plantings, furnishings, and sidewalk dining/retail where appropriate. These changes to just the west side of Main Street results in a 26% increase in the amount of space dedicated to pedestrians and a 131% increase in space for plantings and trees.

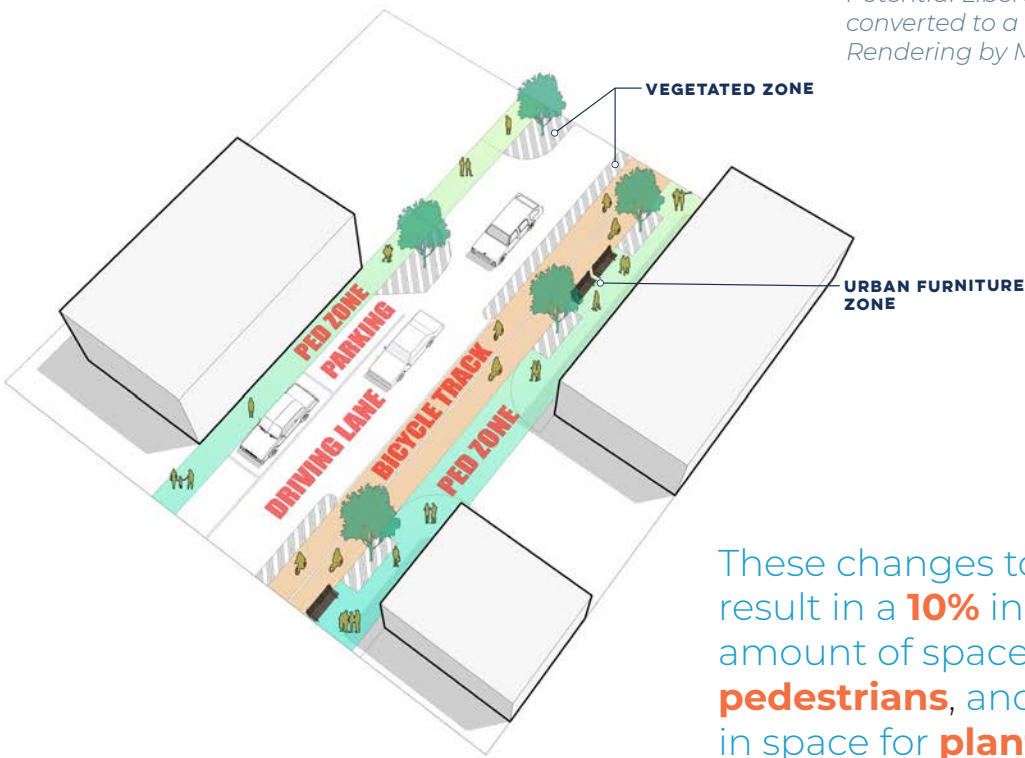


The road is much too wide coming into Downtown. It should start to “feel” like a downtown before Hotel Madison.

- quote from public engagement



Potential Liberty Street redesign with one lane converted to a two-way cycle track.
 Rendering by Monteverde Engineering & Design

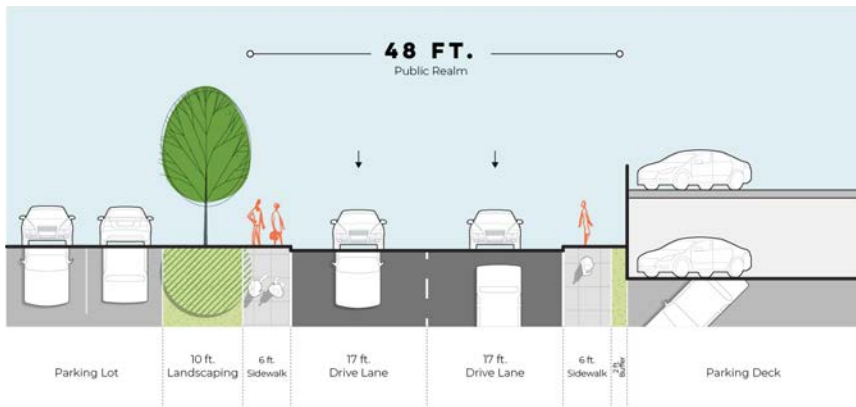


These changes to Liberty Street result in a **10%** increase in the amount of space dedicated to **pedestrians**, and a **117%** increase in space for **plantings and trees & new bicycle lanes**.



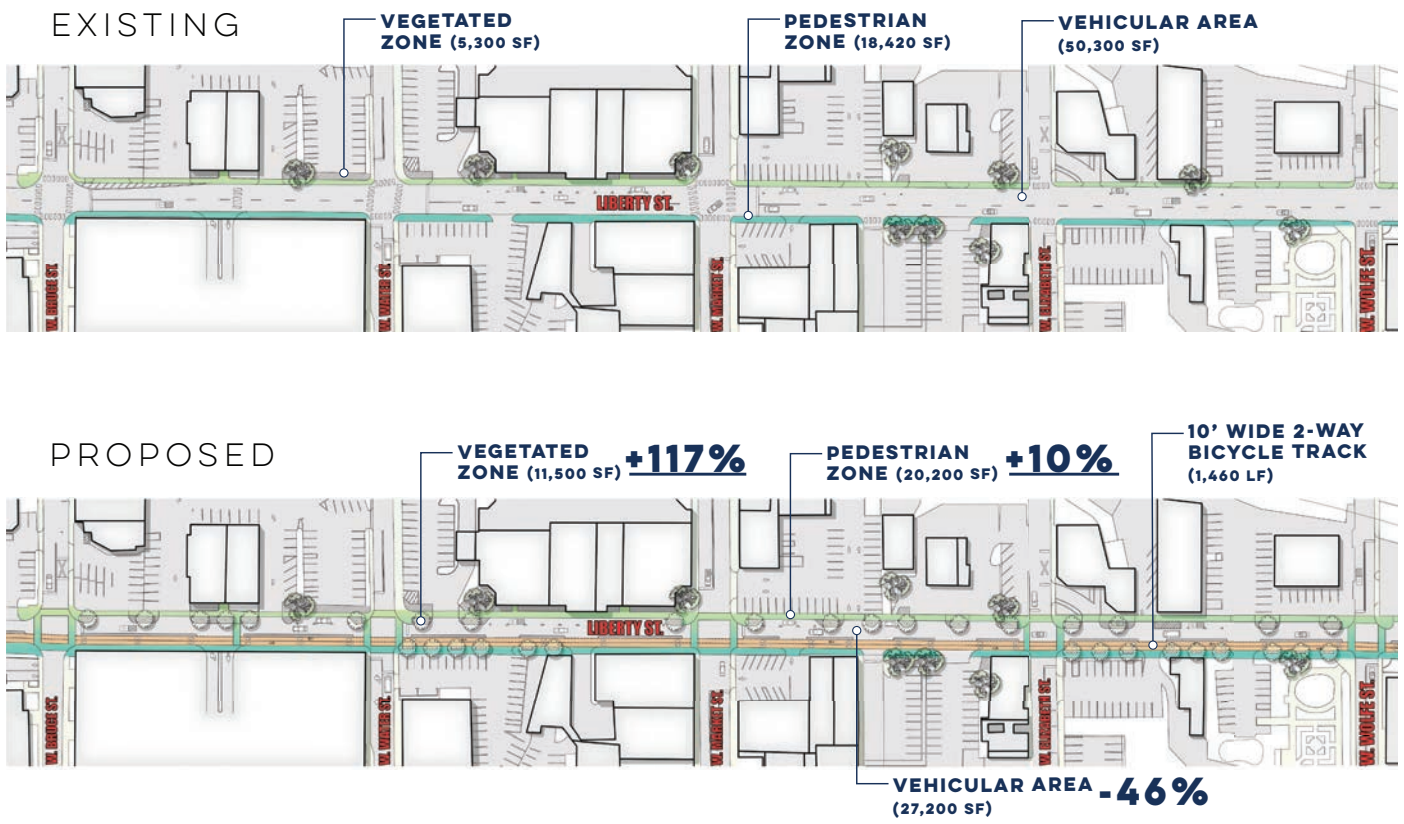
10
 Repurpose one travel lane on Liberty Street for cyclists instead of drivers

As with Main Street, there is an opportunity to redesign Liberty Street and reconsider how many lanes are needed. The cars and trucks that use Liberty are often speeding because there is too much space for driving and limited traffic. As an early action item, work to slow down the speed along Liberty, retain and expand on-street parking, introduce bicycle infrastructure, and integrate amenities to support existing and new businesses.



Above:
 Existing Liberty Street devotes the majority of the right-of-way to fast moving vehicular lanes.

A
In the near term, retain the existing right-of-way, maintaining curb lines on both sides of the street - Moving curbs is the most expensive option for redesigning any street. Maintain the curbs in their current position, and design entirely within the existing right-of-way.



Above:
 Potential Liberty Street with one lane converted to a two-way cycle track.
 Analysis and design by Monteverde Engineering & Design



B
Add bump-outs at intersections on the west side - Expand space for people and greening on the west side of the street. These bumpouts will clearly define on-street parking spaces.

C
Replace the eastern drive lane with a two-way cycle track protected by raised planters that create a landscaped buffer - With the removal of this travel lane, there is space for a two-way bicycle track along Liberty, which will play a critical role in connecting Downtown with trails north and south. To ensure cyclists are safe, integrate a raised planting area between the bike lanes and the remaining travel lane.



Above:
 Rendering of Liberty Street with one lane converted to a two-way cycle track by Monteverde

Showcase Downtown's History & Identity in the Streetscape

ACTION ITEMS:

11 –

Bring hidden narratives to life through public art and storytelling

Existing wayfinding in Downtown points to large regional destinations, but some of the most charming local paths, stories, and community hang-outs remain local secrets. Art, small scale wayfinding, and historical narratives can serve as stepping stones, encouraging locals and visitors to deepen their knowledge of the area and explore new corners of Downtown.

11

Bring hidden narratives to life through public art and storytelling

Ideas for enriching the public realm and sharing Harrisonburg's histories include:

A

Acknowledging the Indigenous tribes who occupied the Valley for 15,000 years, traveling in and out of the Valley

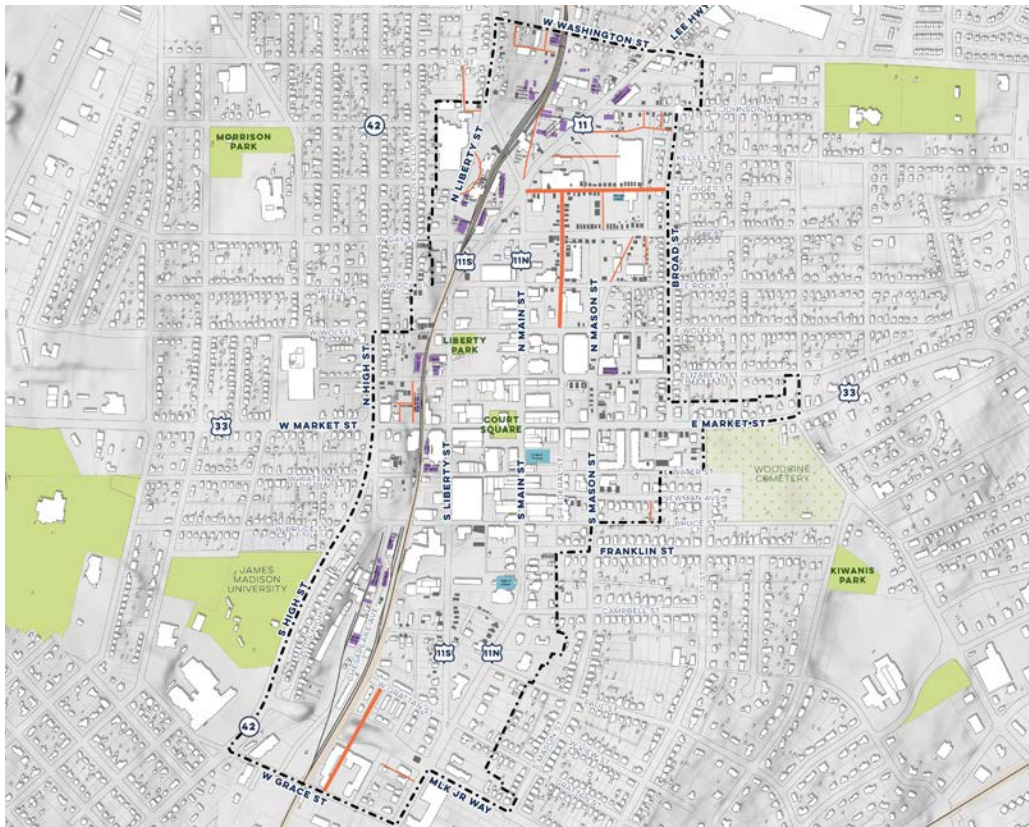
B

Telling the story of historic crossroads and the Market Days that activated Court Square

C

Working with local partners to retrace the streets and buildings demolished during Urban Renewal, and pairing this investment in public art with signage that strikes to reconnect spaces and communities

HISTORICAL BUILDINGS & STREETS



- STUDY AREA
- FORMER STREET 1930 (Minor Street)
- FORMER STREET 1930 (Major Street)
- FORMER BUILDING (~350 properties)
- FORMER BUILDING (Industrial)
- FORMER BUILDING (Institutional)

“We have to acknowledge that ‘Downtown’ is an artifact of what happened in the 1960s - a rupture. Before there was no disconnect between Downtown and the Northeast neighborhood.”

- quote from public engagement

Source: Interface Studio interpretation of historic maps found at <http://www.gtsc.jmu.edu/shps/map/>

Below:
Images depicting the Northeast as it looks today and how it looked in the past before Urban Renewal.
Drawings by Interface Studio

D
Documenting the history of work in Downtown by helping people “see” the range of businesses and industry that once existed on the east side of Downtown, along the rail line.

E
Building a play trail for families drawn by the children’s museum and library, with elements installed closer to the ground that engage a youthful audience and make walking and learning fun!

F
Offering thematic walking tours that share, for example: the history of the local environment, Blacks Run and the springs; the religious landscape over time; stories from Newtown and its historic cemetery; and the role of poultry and agriculture as an economic driver





Continue to Animate the Public Realm

ACTION ITEMS:

12 -

Broaden Downtown's appeal by placing an intentional focus of inclusive programming and art

Activating Downtown in the short-term is critical to local economic development in that it can increase the amount of time and money that residents, visitors, and workers spend Downtown. Results during the public outreach process showed that active programming and public art ranked among the top improvements to help showcase Downtown. However, Downtown lacks a coordinated activation strategy that engages people of all ages and interests throughout the year.

A reimagined Downtown activation strategy presents several distinct opportunities. Programming and activation is a relatively low-cost improvement in relation to other interventions and, because these activities can be mobile, they enable us to test different ideas in different locations to see what works best. Mural installations, music performances, beer gardens, cultural fairs, and winter holiday markets lend themselves to photographs that can spread widely and organically on social media, which in turn helps perpetuate a new narrative of Downtown as an active and edgy place with lots to offer. And, by providing more year-round activity, the increased vibrancy in Downtown would help attract and retain residents, give workers at Downtown businesses more reasons to patronize Downtown at lunch, after work, and on weekends, and help to encourage more visitors to explore what Downtown has to offer.

*Right:
Dance party at
Cambridge, MA City Hall*





12

Broaden Downtown's appeal by placing an intentional focus of inclusive programming and art

"Art in the city should be as diverse as our community and the people here. Everyone should be able to see themselves in public art - visual and performing."

- quote from public engagement



Downtown must offer a range of programming to welcome everyone. As a multicultural city with a positive national reputation around immigration and diversity, Downtown programming should reflect the community's diversity.

A
Boost the capacity of the Arts Council and other organizations with more dollars and staff to bring public art Downtown. A 1% for Art Program common in many cities would benefit Harrisonburg and Downtown specifically. Art is an economic generator and needs support in order to reopen and operate the Downtown theater, expand programming, promote the City, and create a review process for public art proposals.

B
Create an activation team to help plan and execute Downtown events - Ensure that team members reflect Harrisonburg's diversity. This team would be tasked with identifying programming ideas, working with local partners to help with implementation, and marketing events to their networks to draw more people to Downtown.

C
Open the doors for new ideas about how to activate Downtown - Many residents and business owners have ideas for things that could be done Downtown. Help this process along by providing a map of spaces and a short "how-to" guide for planning, gaining City approval, and getting it done.

D
Integrate public art into Downtown's alleys - These "off-menu" paths are a perfect location for new public art that can serve as draws in and of themselves.

E
Create an interactive art wall Downtown, one that is visible and encourages people to express what they find weird yet charming about Harrisonburg. There are examples of interactive walls from large, designed chalk boards to changing video displays.

F
Dance party at Court Square - As an initial idea, create a dance party to test the temporary closure of the south side of Court Square.

G
Close West Water Street for larger events - Until a new park is created Downtown, consider Water Street an opportunity to organize a major block party.

Importantly, ensure that all members of the Harrisonburg community have access to such events and Downtown destinations, regardless of whether they have a car. Coordinate with the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation (HDPT) to offer and advertise special routes that connect different parts of the City and region for major events and programming, as well as to increase access to new capital improvements Downtown, such as the proposed new park and playground.

!!! Diversify Downtown's Business Ecosystem

ACTION ITEMS:

13 -

Continue to support the focus on local business

14 -

Don't require retail (including restaurants) everywhere with new development

15 -

Build the market by attracting more residents and more visitors

Downtown has uneven utilization of first floor space despite a thriving food scene and many long-standing retailers. In an age when residents are now working from anywhere, Harrisonburg can be an attractive location for remote workers. Focus on efforts to support existing businesses and build a market for new ones.



Above:
Macon GA, grand opening of one of many locally-owned minority businesses in Downtown since 2015
Source: NewTown Macon



Left:
Vendors share space at
Agora Downtown Market

13

Continue to support the focus on local business

Local businesses are what give Downtown Harrisonburg its unique personality. Downtown needs to remain a home for local businesses, but it can be difficult to find spaces Downtown for new businesses.

A

Develop programs to increase participation by Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant/refugee, disabled, and women-owned businesses by offering micro-loans, marketing assistance, coaching and mini grants to offset the cost of Downtown space. Continue to promote the successful launch of B-Cubed. Macon, GA created a Downtown Diversity Initiative which has provided 64% of loans to minority-owned businesses.

C

Expand pop-up and shared-space strategies for local makers and entrepreneurs - The Agora is a great example of providing non-traditional spaces for small businesses. Organize additional Downtown fairs for local makers to further activate underutilized space (parking lots, alleys, etc.), and support local food trucks, mobile vending, and entrepreneurship opportunities in Downtown.

B

Create a tenant improvement program to provide move-in ready spaces to interested tenants - This is focused on unused ground floor spaces that need work to become move-in ready. Target one or two spaces per year, and work with the property owners to upgrade the spaces, and then provide support to find a suitable tenant.



BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

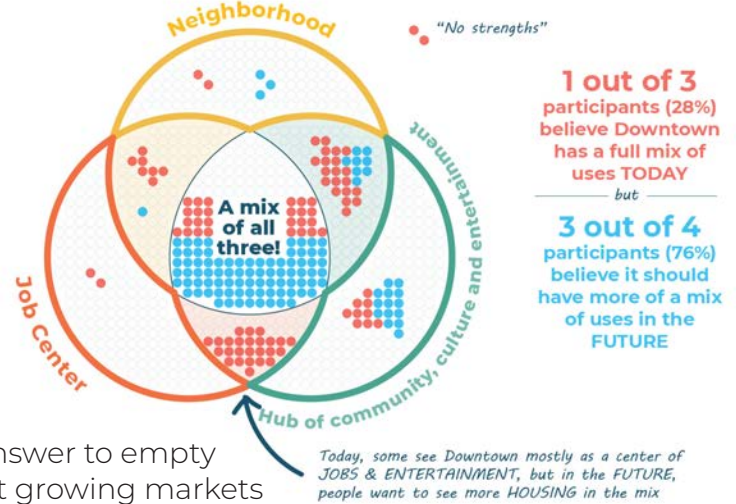
Question: What alternatives to retail would you like to see in Downtown commercial spaces?

The top choice for participants was **Small Business Opportunities**, followed by **Event Space** and **Active Recreation Space**.



14
Don't require retail (including restaurants) everywhere with new development

Question: In your mind, how does Downtown function today, and how should it function going forward?



1 out of 3 participants (28%) believe Downtown has a full mix of uses **TODAY** but **3 out of 4** participants (76%) believe it should have more of a mix of uses in the **FUTURE**

Retail is not the only answer to empty spaces. Even large, fast growing markets are struggling to attract and expand retail and restaurants. Downtown sales were relatively flat prior to the pandemic, so new options are needed to activate empty storefronts.

A Encourage a creative mix of uses to activate ground floor spaces - look beyond retail to encourage new creative businesses, offices, art studios and small-scale manufacturing (makers). Create and market an inventory of empty spaces to prospective businesses, and develop simple storefront guidelines to ensure new businesses offer an active and transparent face to the street.

B Fill gaps between hubs of commercial activity through collaborations with the local arts community - Don't try to look past that empty storefront, but instead tap into local talent to design window coverings that will improve the look and feel of Downtown.

C Form a partnership with an area institution to bring a commercial kitchen / food incubator to Downtown - Do so with sliding scale prices to ensure that it is financially feasible for emerging local business. Harrisonburg has an excellent food scene for a city of its size. New immigrants bring new opportunities to expand the local palette, vending options at the Farmers Market, and the local mix of restaurants.

Immigrants and refugees bring great ideas. The City has benefited and embraced these new neighbors, but how are we supporting folks taking a risk and rebuilding their livelihoods?
 - quote from public engagement



We're stronger together. Train employees so they get to know the stores and what they each offer. Employees can be ambassadors for the whole community.

- quote from public engagement



15

Build the market by attracting more residents and more visitors

To expand local businesses in Downtown, Harrisonburg needs to grow its customer base by looking to three sources: 1) new residents in Downtown; 2) more residents from nearby neighborhoods willing and interested to come to Downtown more often (see ideas in this plan about programming and activation) and; 3) more visitors to Harrisonburg for a university tour or event and more visitors choosing to make Harrisonburg a part of their trip to the Shenandoah Valley. To attract more residents living in Downtown, new housing is needed (see Action Step 16), but to attract more City residents and outside visitors will require more art, events, and buzz about Downtown.

A

Increase marketing capacity to tell the story of Downtown and what it has to offer. To target newcomers from near and far, this will require different campaigns and different channels for reaching target audiences.

B

Coordinate with local universities to make sure students are invited Downtown early in their college experience - and often. Fold Eastern Mennonite University into events like the Block Party, hosted during student orientation through a collaboration between JMU and HDR. Additionally, seek opportunities to tap the energy and expertise of these local institutions. Students and faculty may be interested in working with Downtown leaders as a practicum to assist in marketing, branding, wayfinding, and events-related efforts.

Below:
Examples of new housing Downtown (Ice House & Urban Exchange).





Grow Downtown as a Neighborhood

ACTION ITEMS:

16 -

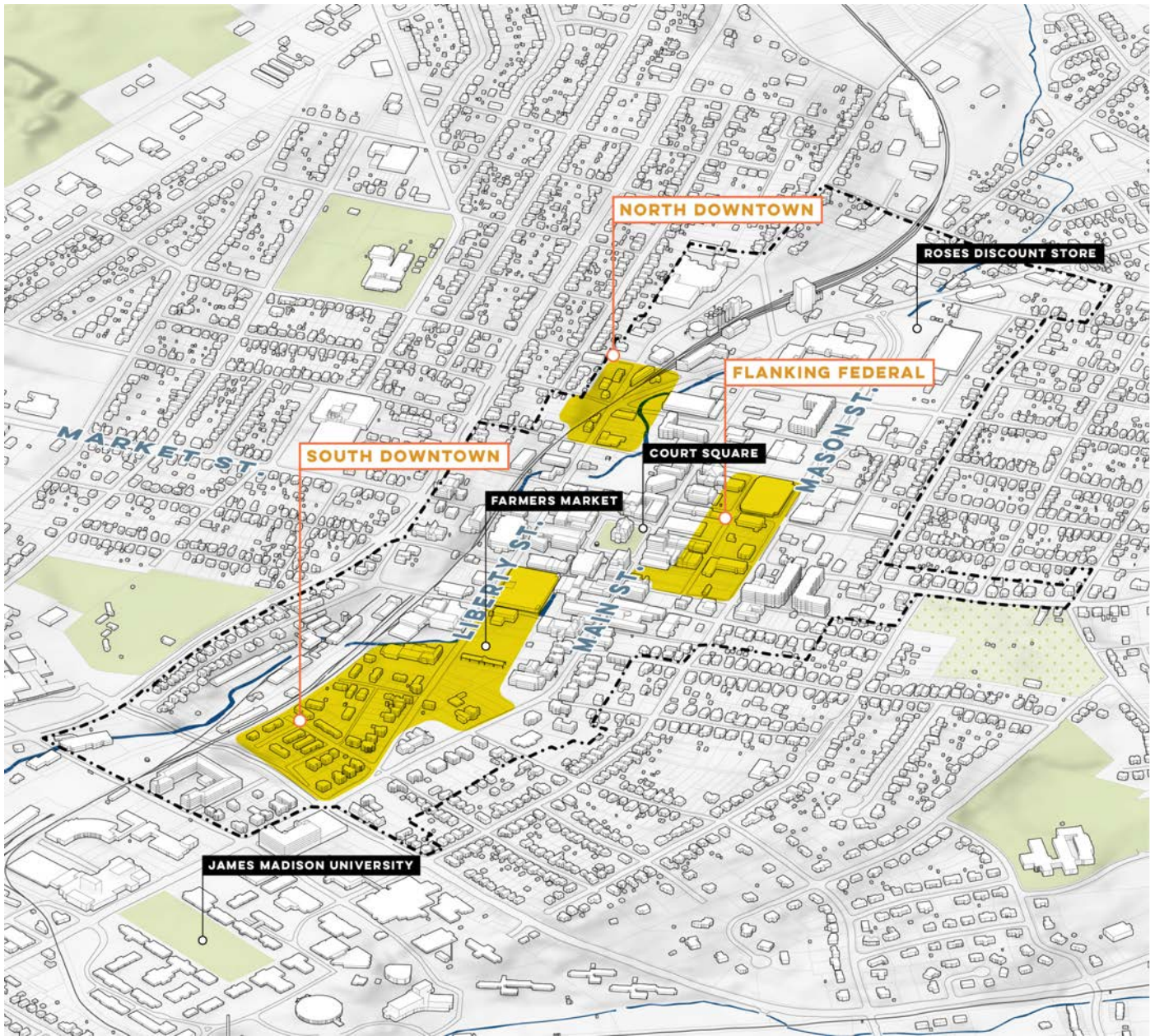
Encourage mixed-use and residential development in key clusters

17 -

In the long-term, seek opportunities to add density and improve the urban design at key Downtown sites

Downtown has an estimated 2,600 residents. The housing units Downtown are in high demand, and there is very little vacancy. While the number of housing units and residents have grown Downtown, there is a need for more housing to support local businesses. The best downtowns feel like both a business district and a neighborhood. The recently completed housing market study for the City emphasizes the need for more housing at the upper and lower ends of the income scale. Downtown can play a key role in providing more housing for a wider mix of incomes.

POTENTIAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



16

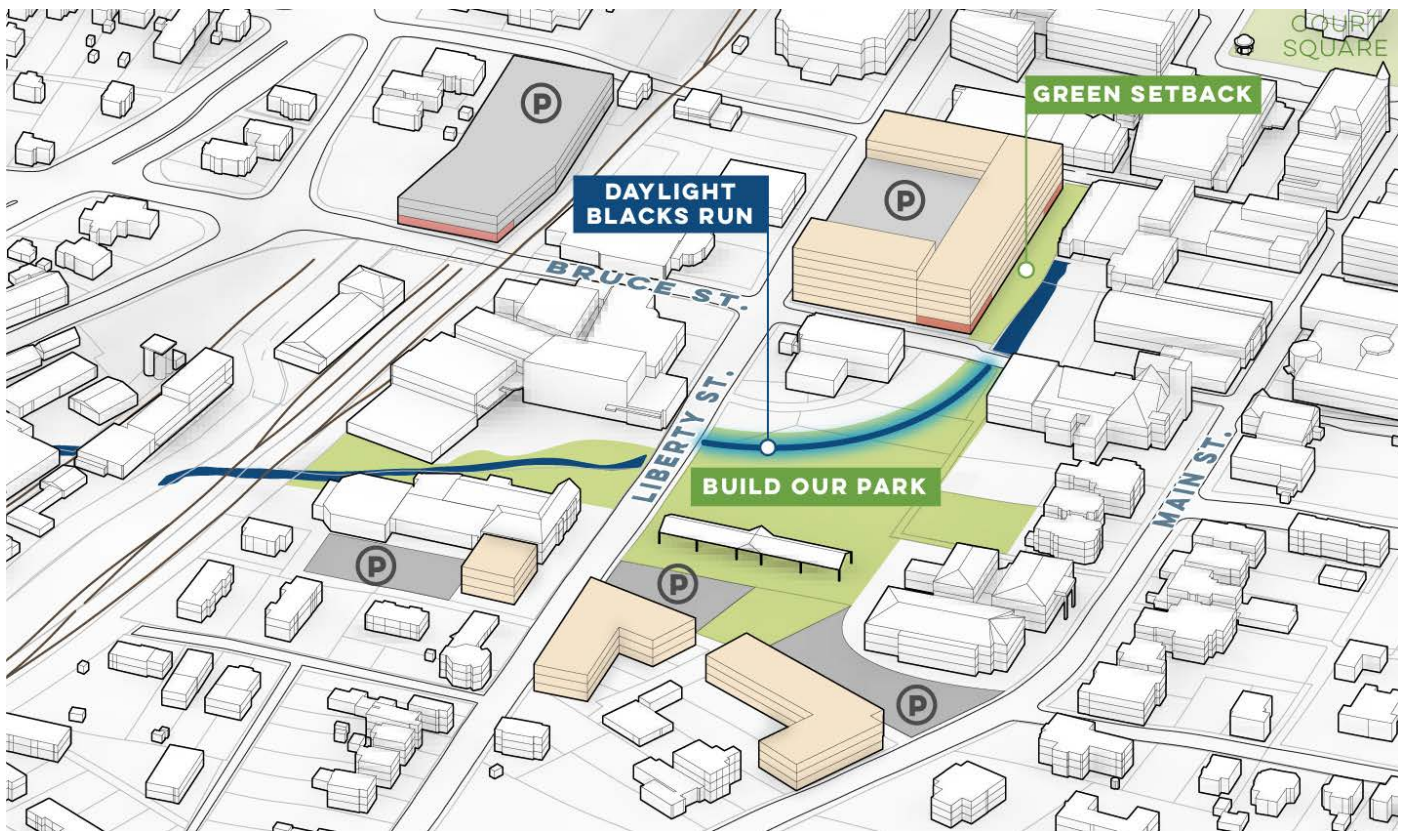
Encourage mixed-use and residential development in key clusters of currently underutilized space

While there are potential opportunities to develop housing across Downtown, there are two areas where there are clusters of underutilized property ripe for reinvestment. Both of these areas are around the existing City-controlled parking decks that are in need of redevelopment. Redevelopment in these two pockets of Downtown alone could bring 580 new homes to Downtown, 50,000 square feet of new commercial space and an additional 300 parking spaces.

Conceptual site plan for:

SOUTH DOWNTOWN

■ residential ■ commercial ■ parking ■ open space



A

Create more activity south of Water Street - The Ice House has brought new life in Downtown south of the concentration of restaurants along Water and Main Streets. Currently, the Farmers Market anchors what is now a large surface parking lot. The recent parking study indicates the Water Street parking deck should be redeveloped given its age and condition. Redevelop the deck as a new mixed-use structure with housing wrapping a new parking deck. Activate Water Street and Blacks Run with new space for commercial uses. Step the new

building back from Blacks Run as well to create a linear park along the creek to help connect this area south toward the Farmers Market and the proposed park. Integrate new housing close to City Hall to activate the south side of the Farmers Market, encouraging green building solutions, such as solar energy and recycled or sustainable materials. Coordinate with nearby private property owners about the possibility of creating new parking just to the west of Liberty Street intended to serve a range of developments and businesses.

New Parking:

1,040 spaces

Net New Parking:

270 spaces

New Residential:

270 units

New Commercial:

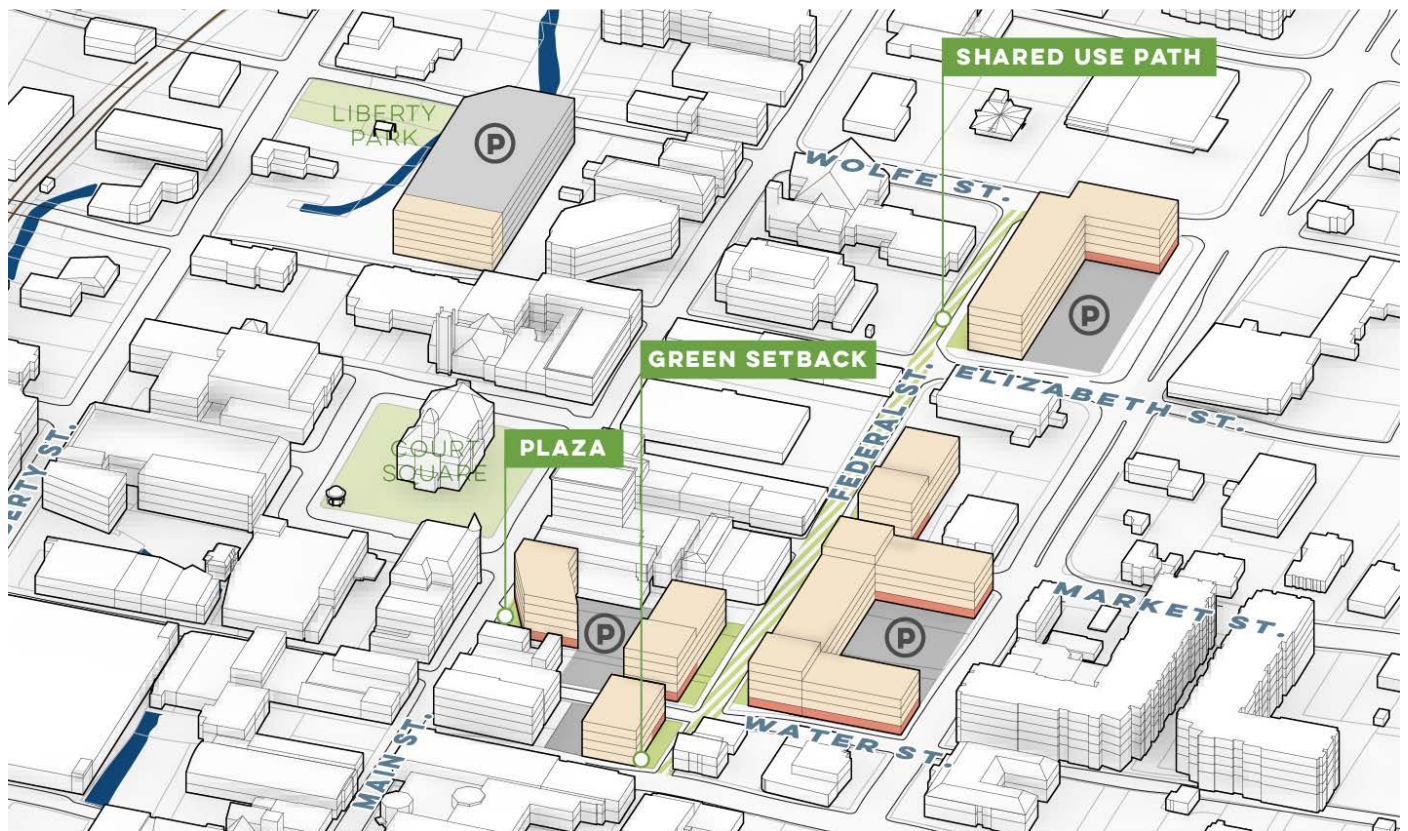
13,000 square feet

New Park Space:

2 acres

Conceptual site plan for:
FLANKING FEDERAL

residential
 commercial
 parking
 open space



B
 Develop Federal Street - Federal Street currently touches a collection of surface parking lots and the Elizabeth Street parking deck at Wolfe Street. The recent parking study indicates the Elizabeth Street parking deck should be redeveloped given its age and condition. Build a new deck to the west behind the Public Safety building along Elizabeth Street. This will provide parking that is more convenient to businesses on both Main

and Liberty Streets. Redevelop the existing Elizabeth Street parking deck for new housing with commercial uses facing the Friendly City Food Co-op and Kline's Dairy. Build additional housing along Federal Street with a setback to further enhance the proposed shared street. Also infill along Main Street, but leave space for a plaza that maintains views from Federal to the Court House and space for the outdoor seating in Jack Town that became so successful during the pandemic.

New Parking:
700 spaces

Net New Parking:
30 spaces

New Residential:
310 units

New Commercial:
37,000 square feet



17

In the long-term, seek opportunities to add density and improve the urban design at key Downtown sites

On the fringes of Downtown, a number of areas should be considered for future investment should the ownership or the current use change.

A

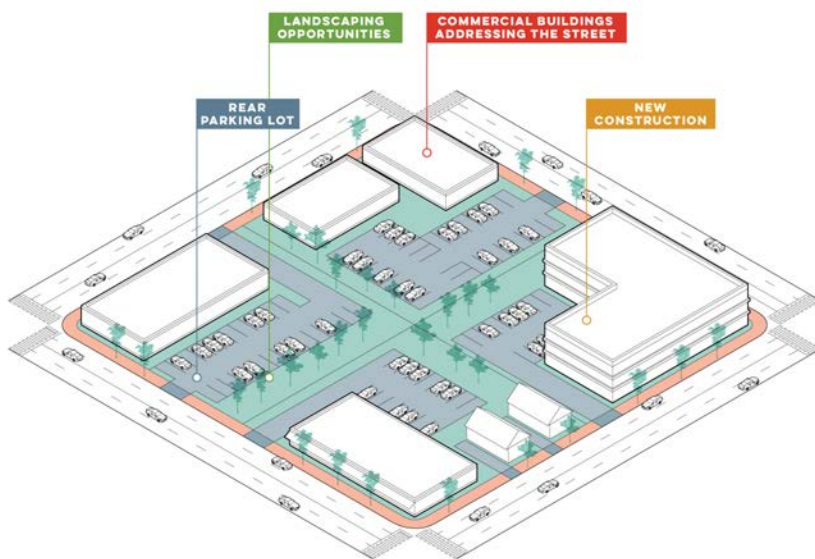
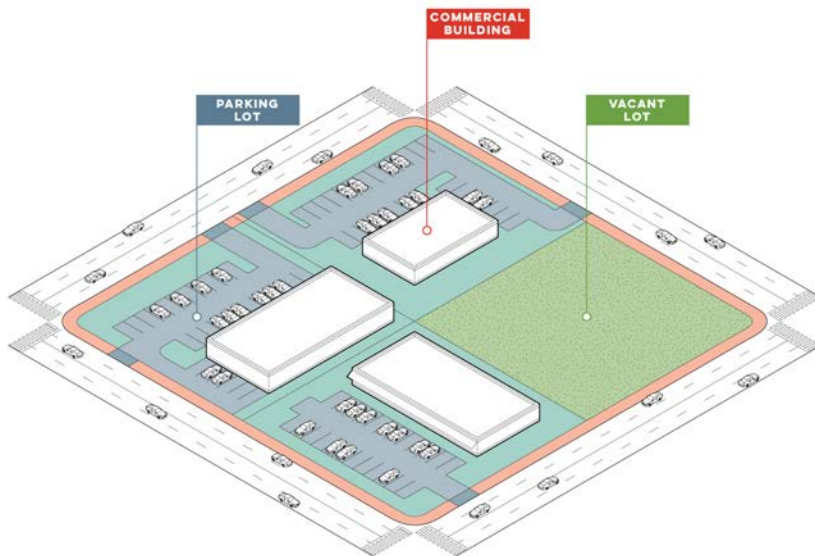
Improve and activate the north end of Downtown - The Urban Renewal process that removed primarily Black-owned businesses and homes created what is today an auto-oriented collection of uses where large parking lots are the dominant feature. In the short term, work with property owners to:

- Integrate new landscaping to manage stormwater along the edges of the property
- Create public art that brings a greater awareness of what was lost during Urban Renewal
- Integrate new small-scale commercial businesses on unused portions of parking lots where appropriate and possible
- Create commercial design guidelines to guide future investment decisions in the area; seek pedestrian-oriented development, avoiding land uses and site designs that cater to cars such as gas stations and drive-throughs

In the future, for major sites like Roses, any redevelopment must serve the needs and vision of those in the Northeast neighborhood. Whether this includes new housing or space for small businesses, it is critical that any change to this and other sites be done in line and in collaboration with the mission and values of local partners.



The Roses Shopping Center and its large surface parking lot take up a considerable amount of space in northeast Downtown.



B Upgrade housing conditions and opportunity in the south end of Downtown - The area between the rail line and Main / Liberty streets is a small pocket of primarily small-scale multi-family housing. Some of these structures are aging and in poor condition. Infill rehabilitation and redevelopment in this area is appropriate when opportunities arise. Maintain a list of nuisance properties in the area, and advocate for a broader range of housing units including attached townhomes and stacked townhomes to provide more housing opportunities for families.

Top: Example of existing conditions at typical auto-oriented commercial block in North Downtown.

Left: Potential future condition with improved urban design for more walkable, pedestrian-friendly experience.



Integrate District Infrastructure

ACTION ITEMS:

18 -

Integrate stormwater management into surface parking lots to improve water quality

19 -

Build new parking resources to free up key sites for redevelopment

20 -

Explore shared sanitation solutions, like Roanoke's sealed trash compactors

Due to the density and mix of activities, downtowns are more difficult to manage than a traditional neighborhood. It is more cost effective to share some infrastructure like parking, stormwater management, and trash collection rather than attempt to build in measures for each on every site. The idea is to integrate new infrastructure measures Downtown that provide wide ranging benefits to all property owners, businesses, residents and visitors.

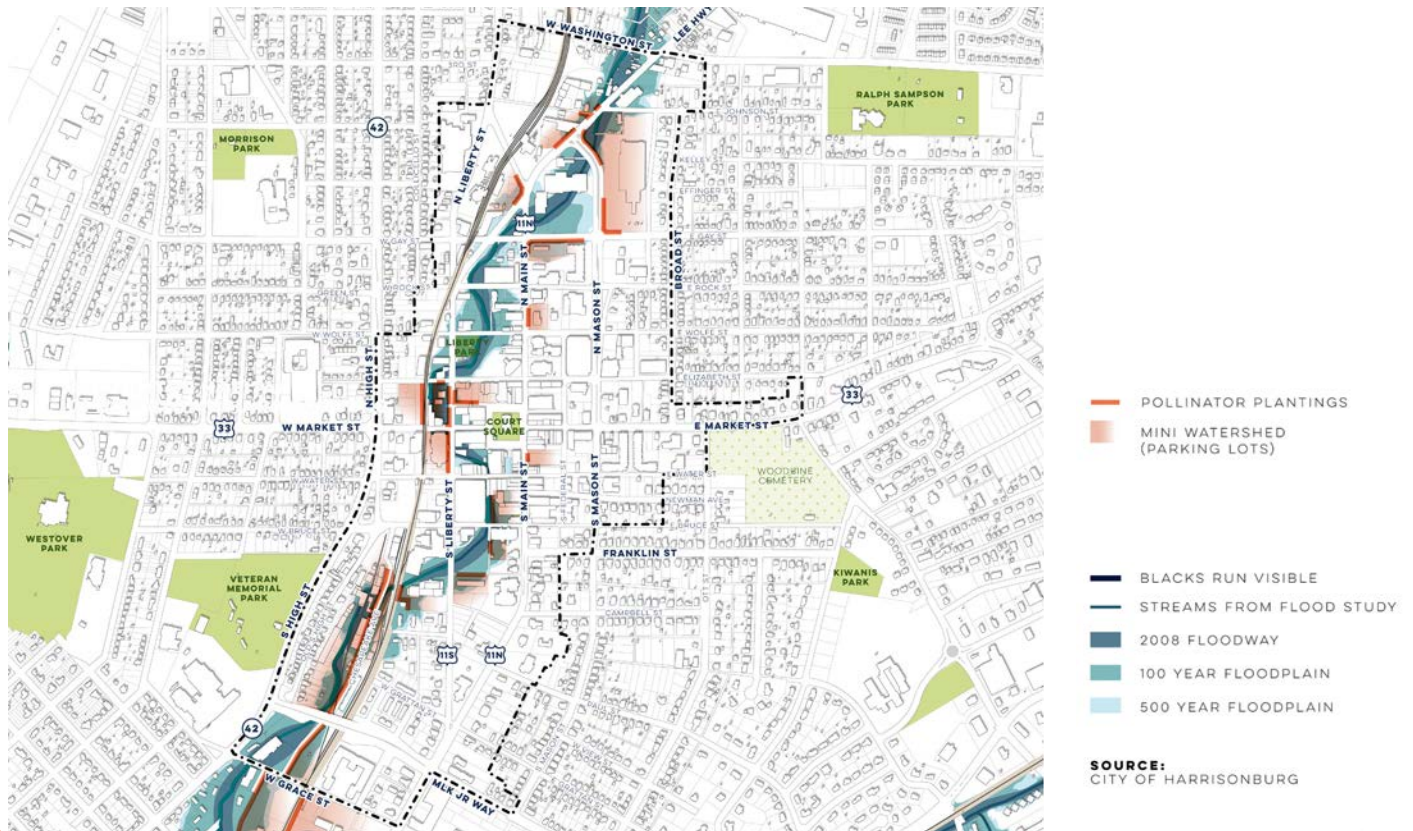


“Turn parking adjacent to the Run into a park asset... How do you blend urban design with stormwater management and park development into an award-winning downtown experience that creates connections to and through the existing space?”

- quote from public engagement



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT TARGET AREAS



18
Integrate stormwater management into surface parking lots to improve water quality



Example of a parking lot that incorporates stormwater management into its design. Designed by Merritt Chase

The quality and quantity of stormwater in Downtown Harrisonburg could be dramatically improved with parking lot or parking spot retrofits. Strategic integration of green infrastructure (ie: rain gardens and bioswales) can maintain available parking while slowing stormwater runoff and improving water quality of runoff that empties into Blacks Run. Approach surface parking lots



as mini-watersheds, and design small green infrastructure projects that replace segments of paved parking with rain gardens and/or permeable paving to absorb and filter stormwater runoff. Identify a private property owner willing to undertake a demonstration and beautification project on their lot. Hire an engineering firm to conduct hydrologic analyses to understand the volume of water that could be captured and size the stormwater infrastructure accordingly. Work with a landscape architect to design the above ground rain garden planted with native species that attract pollinators. Work with a contractor to build the project and recruit a team of volunteers to serve as a “Friends of” to help tend these new green spaces as needed and keep them looking healthy, fresh and beautiful.



19

Build new parking resources to free up key sites for redevelopment

As indicated in the 2020 Downtown Parking Plan, future development in the vicinity is anticipated to result in a parking deficit of 700+ parking spaces if not addressed with additional supply. Explore the following practices as part of a comprehensive plan to address parking needs at the Downtown district scale:

A
Move forward with a new municipal parking structure behind the Public Safety building

- As noted in the Parking Plan, a new parking garage on this site can be expected to yield approximately 500 parking spaces, for a net increase of ~370 spaces. Prioritizing this project would create needed capacity prior to replacement of either or both of the Water Street and Elizabeth Street decks, while also providing more proximate public parking in the vicinity of new development within the North Liberty quadrant of Downtown.

C
Encourage shared parking - While development of current surface parking will ultimately create the density that a thriving Downtown needs, allowing for landowners to open their private lots or garages to adjacent users will help offset parking deficits while new structures are constructed and prevent an over-abundance of parking spaces that remain unoccupied over the course of the day or week. Such allowances may require modifications to current zoning, and should be coordinated with City's zoning ordinance revision.



B
Pursue PPPs to catalyze the creation of additional parking garages

- Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) may present opportune ways to expedite construction of new public parking structures without incurring significant debt. It is anticipated that inclusion of mixed-use (both housing and commercial) components in the structures will provide revenue and tax bases sufficient to offset the majority of new structure costs without the need for overly-high parking fees.

D
Incorporate electric vehicle (EV) parking - As adoption of EVs continues to gain momentum, it will be important to make provisions for charging stations in the Downtown market area. Inclusion in any new parking structures should be explored, at a minimum. Such provisions will make Downtown Harrisonburg more attractive for destination charging, which results in a wider user base and increased visit durations.

E
Seek opportunities to integrate renewable energy technology in new parking infrastructure

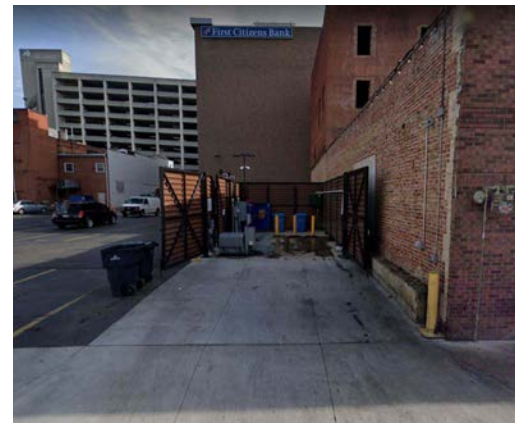
- Evaluate the potential of solar arrays atop new parking decks while preserving sight lines and a commitment to quality design.

*Above:
Images of existing parking facilities at Water and Elizabeth Streets.*



Above:
An individual bringing
trash to a shared trash
compactor in Roanoke, VA

Right:
Additional examples of
shared trash compactors
in Roanoke, VA



20

Explore shared
sanitation
solutions, like
Roanoke's sealed
trash compactors

Managing trash in Downtown areas can be a major challenge. If done poorly, nearby properties and businesses can be severely impacted. As more development comes to Downtown, it will be important to proactively manage trash collection and storage. Evaluate the Roanoke program of shared trash compactors for adjacent businesses. Develop standards for their location and enclosures, and work with businesses to pilot this work as well as developers to integrate the system into new large-scale projects. Keep track of the progress, and, if successful, expand the initiative to other blocks in Downtown.



"Because businesses have trash pick up every day, everyday is trash day. The trash, dumpsters and ugly containers create a bad first impression."

- quote from public engagement



Make it
Happen!



The Downtown 2040 master plan presents a range of action steps for Downtown Harrisonburg. Some are lower cost and can be accomplished in the near term, while others are complex and costly and will require time, significant resources, and coordination between the City, HDR, and private property owners.

Success in implementation over the coming two decades will require multiple ingredients - not just financial resources, but dedicated staff and volunteer time. Successful downtowns across the country have the necessary people power to focus on moving the plan forward and ensuring high quality outcomes in keeping with the community's vision. To make sure that the momentum built in the previous decade and throughout the planning process continues, the City, HDR, investors and Downtown champions will need to work together. No one entity alone can bring the plan's vision to reality, but Harrisonburg's can-do attitude, community spirit, and passion for Downtown suggest that together, we can make it happen!



Raise and allocate funds for long-term capital improvements and smaller community-led projects

All in, the Downtown 2040 plan includes an estimated \$40 million or more in public improvements. This is not out of step with what other cities have tackled and those cities have experienced the long-term economic benefits of that investment. There are different financial mechanisms possible to capture and direct needed dollars to Downtown. Some, like Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which captures the increased tax revenue from new development and recycles those dollars within the Downtown district, require development of a certain scale before this is really effective. Likewise with public private partnerships (PPPs or P3s); such projects typically arise with larger-scale developments that can take years to structure and break ground.

Other methods are quicker to yield accessible funds. Special assessments on Downtown property owners with their approval, City capital budget allocations, philanthropic contributions, American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and/or a combination of these sources can help the City, HDR, and local partners effect visible, tangible change in the near term.

One potential strategy worth exploring is the Commonwealth of Virginia's Community Development Authority (CDA), which provides funding and management for infrastructure improvements and special services necessary to meet demands placed on a locality due to development within the district. CDAs can issue 20- or 30-year bonds to finance, fund, establish, acquire, construct, equip, operate, and maintain infrastructure improvements including sidewalks, parking, parks, and services (trash, groundskeeping, etc.). They can last up to 50 years, require support of a majority of the landowners in the district, and are governed by a board appointed by City Council.

Right: A potential implementation approach



Launch a Downtown Challenge Grant program

Another way to raise - and deploy funds - while also recruiting meaningful volunteer participation by providing resources for passion projects is to launch a Downtown Challenge Grant program. This model requires a sizable philanthropic gift that empowers community members to play an active role in implementing immediate action items and opportunities for interim programming of longer-term project sites. Often administered by the local Community Foundation in partnership with plan stewards, these challenge grant programs can finance projects proposed by community members in the spirit of the plan, which helps maintain momentum and advance smaller-scale efforts as groundwork is laid for larger developments and capital projects.

If such funding can be secured, representatives from the City, HDR, and community should draft a simple call for proposals to be published twice a year asking for a project or idea, a project budget and timeline, an explanation of how the project relates to the plan, and how it will be implemented and by whom. Incorporate technical assistance in the application process to ensure diverse participation and high quality submissions. Assemble a Downtown Challenge Review Committee and process to select winning proposals, and be prepared to support each cohort of grantees as they bring their projects to life.

Transition the Steering Committee to an Implementation Committee

Throughout the Downtown 2040 planning process, a client group met regularly, affording consistent coordination between the City and HDR as well as the planning team. Representatives from the City and HDR should continue to meet monthly, and consider expanding as necessary. This group will provide the dedicated staff time for project management of plan implementation efforts, manage design approvals and construction, and broker public-private partnerships.

It is also important to transition the Steering Committee convened to guide the planning process into an Implementation Committee that will partner with the City and HDR, advocating for and ensuring accountability to the community's vision documented in this plan. The Committee can be smaller so that it is nimble, and the composition can evolve over time, but it should include people interested in serving in an advisory capacity as well as people looking for hands-on roles and responsibilities. The Implementation Committee should provide community oversight and support as well as design review and curation of programs and public art investments. It may be worthwhile to develop sub-committees, perhaps dedicated to streets, parks, development, and art/programming/marketing efforts.

(must have development to scale)

VALUE CAPTURE
EX. TAX
INCREMENT
FINANCING

PUBLIC
PRIVATE
PARTNERSHIPS

SPECIAL
ASSESSMENT
AND/OR
CAPITAL BUDGET
REALLOCATION
PLUS
CHALLENGE
GRANTS

SLOWER TO
YIELD ACCESSIBLE
FUNDS

QUICKER TO
YIELD ACCESSIBLE
FUNDS

Develop an early-action strategy for the coming year(s)

A key role of the Implementation Committee is to provide continuity and coordination over time. Major developments and projects that require planning, design, and engineering are likely to take at least three to five years to complete. However, it is critical that the City and HDR use the interim time well. Early action steps include determining the best approach and establishing a value capture or revenue mechanism to help pay for the public improvements called for in the plan. Coordinating the phasing of other major projects, such as building a new parking resource(s) to free up space for redevelopment or park space and exploring the feasibility of daylighting Blacks Run to inform future park designs, will be critical to unlocking progress. In the meantime, seek opportunities to pilot or test design and program concepts for larger capital projects that will require major investments before they are completed (ex. Federal Street shared street). While the longer-term initiatives begin to take shape, community-driven projects can and should take root, activating spaces and building on local talent and assets to demonstrate that the plan is already in action.

“The piecemeal patchwork approach creates unevenness. A couple little things won’t move the needle.”

- quote from public engagement



Implementation Matrix

 = Public Priority

**ESTIMATED
COST**

CONNECT TO THE REGIONS CORE

01 EXTEND REGIONAL TRAILS TO AND THROUGH DOWNTOWN

TBD

02 PROVIDE A SENSE OF ARRIVAL WITH ART AND PLANTINGS

Install a large scale mural on the feed mill

\$100,000



Plant native wildflowers along key corridors entering the Downtown

\$75,000

EXPAND THE NETWORK OF “OFF-MENU” PATHS

03 BUILD OUT FROM EXISTING PEDESTRIAN CROSSROADS AT WATER STREET & BLACKS RUN

\$100,000



Infuse these spaces with art, color, lighting, and plantings

Install wayfinding at a smaller scale

\$50,000



04 RESTORE THE HEALTH AND PRESENCE OF BLACKS RUN AS A PLACE FOR PEOPLE IN ADDITION TO FLORA AND FAUNA

Cull invasive species

\$10,000

Create more moments to celebrate nature and bring people together along a trail that traverses natural and urban conditions

\$250,000

05 EVOLVE FEDERAL STREET AS A SHARED STREET, DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE FIRST, BUT PROVIDING VEHICULAR ACCESS AS NEEDED

~\$1,000,000 per block

short = years 1&2
 medium = 2-5 years
 long = >5 years

TIME-FRAME

KEY PARTNERS

NOTES ON EARLY ACTION

long	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition	Trail connections will take planning, coordination, and time
short	HDR / private property owner / City of Harrisonburg / Virginia Poultry Federation	HDR / private property owner / City of Harrisonburg / Virginia Poultry Federation
short	HDR / private property owners / City of Harrisonburg	Provide palette ("Burg Seed" Mix) & planting dimensions to interested parties in key locations: Mason, East Market (edge of Cemetery and Court House), George's / Cargill, City Hall on Main, HBC on Main, and office buildings on east side on Main Street
short	HDR / Arts Council / City of Harrisonburg	Extend stencil pattern along whole of Water Street Alley, to create breadcrumbs or markers; add planters and lighting. Eventually incorporate public art exhibits that change once a quarter or so; brand as Harrisonburg Halls
short	HDR / City of Harrisonburg	Release RFP for pedestrian signage
short	City of Harrisonburg	Commission an ecologist/arborist to survey existing plant species, water quality, and infrastructure Recruit volunteers to lead walking tours to raise awareness
long	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / volunteers	Paint rail/existing infrastructure and roadways where creek passes below
medium	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / volunteers	Work with HDR Design committee to design service vehicle pathway and install rolling planters/stencils Offer programming (open streets or dinner party, etc.) to bring people to the space

CREATE NEW OPEN SPACES THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

* 06	ACTIVATE COURT SQUARE	As on-site expansion of the Court House moves forward, be mindful of how the building meets Main Street	N/A
		Improve the south lawn, sidewalk, and street to accommodate events and programming (both formal and informal)	\$1-2 million
* 07	BUILD A DESTINATION DOWNTOWN PARK TO SERVE ALL AGES AND A RANGE OF PROGRAMMING	Design one large park with the potential to daylight Blacks Run, host a playground and event space, and extend the street grid to create strong urban edges and connections to existing and new Downtown attractions	\$5-8 million... \$7-10M if takes a long time

REDESIGN MAIN & LIBERTY TO SERVE DOWNTOWN AS

08	DIVERT TRUCK TRAFFIC AWAY FROM MAIN STREET		\$75,000
* 09	REMOVE ONE VEHICULAR TRAVEL LANE FROM MAIN STREET AND REPLACE WITH A WIDENED SIDEWALK	Retain the bump-outs and curbside drop-offs on the east side	N/A
		Extend the sidewalk on the west side of the street to create more space for pedestrians (plus plantings, furnishings, and sidewalk dining/retail)	\$4-6M varies per furnishing specs
* 10	REPURPOSE ONE TRAVEL LANE ON LIBERTY STREET FOR CYCLISTS INSTEAD OF DRIVERS	In the near term, retain the existing right-of-way, maintaining curb lines on both sides of the street	N/A
		Add bump-outs at intersections on the west side	\$500,000-\$750,000
		Replace the eastern drive lane with a two-way cycle track protected by raised planters that create a landscaped buffer	\$250,000-\$500,000 more for thermoplast lane

TIME-FRAME

KEY PARTNERS

NOTES ON EARLY ACTION

TOGETHER

		<i>This is a coordination and planning initiative</i>
ongoing	<i>Rockingham County / City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	
long	<i>Rockingham County / City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>Close for one day/night block parties, test temporary paving on street, put movable tables and chairs or seating on lawn to invite sitting</i>
long	<i>Build our Park / City of Harrisonburg / HDR / Farmers Market / local property owners</i>	<i>Continue to host range of programming to maintain interest; Update concept design to fundraise; then begin schematic design through construction documentation</i>

A DESTINATION, NOT A PASS THROUGH

medium	<i>Virginia DOT / City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>For coordination, planning and signage</i>
---	---	<i>This simply describes a key aspect of the design approach</i>
long	<i>Virginia DOT / City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>This is a major streetscape project that needs engineering, coordination and budget allocation</i>
---	---	<i>This simply describes a key aspect of the design approach</i>
medium	<i>City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>Stripe bump outs to represent narrowing of roadway</i>
medium	<i>City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>Stripe out buffer, paint cycle track, install & plant raised planters</i>

SHOWCASE DOWNTOWN'S HISTORY & IDENTITY IN THE

*** 11 BRING HIDDEN NARRATIVES TO LIFE THROUGH PUBLIC ART AND STORYTELLING**

Acknowledge Indigenous tribes	\$50,000
Tell the story of historic crossroads and the intersection of cultures Harrisonburg / Downtown today	\$25,000
Work with local partners to retrace the streets and buildings demolished by Urban Renewal	\$25,000
Document the history of work in Downtown by highlighting local businesses	\$10,000
Build a Play Trail for families	\$50,000 - \$100,000 depending on design
Offer thematic walking tours	\$10,000

CONTINUE TO ANIMATE THE PUBLIC REALM WITH PRO

*** 12 BROADEN DOWNTOWN'S APPEAL BY PLACING AN INTENTIONAL FOCUS OF INCLUSIVE PROGRAMMING AND ART**

Boost the capacity of the Arts Council	TBD
Create an "activation team" to execute Downtown events	\$25,000
Open the doors for new ideas about Downtown programming	\$25,000
Integrate public art into Downtown alleys	\$25,000
Create an interactive art wall Downtown	\$75,000
Dance party at Court Square	\$25,000
Close West Water Street for major events	\$10,000
Offer and advertise special transit routes that connect the City and region for major events and programming	TBD

**TIME-
FRAME**

**KEY
PARTNERS**

**NOTES ON
EARLY ACTION**

E STREETScape

short	<i>“Is there a local tribal council or organization? Arts Council / Library / HDR / City of Harrisonburg”</i>	<i>Potentially including public art and an interactive history app for visitors</i>
medium	<i>HDR / JMU / Library / New Bridges / Skyline Literacy / CWS Refugee Resettlement Office</i>	<i>Consider an exhibit in an empty space or storefront about the historic development and make-up of Downtown Harrisonburg</i>
short	<i>NENA / Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project / Arts Council / HDR / private property owners</i>	<i>Work with property owners to look for opportunities to physically mark these changes</i>
medium	<i>HDR / JMU / Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project / NENA</i>	<i>Focus on those on the west side, and existing businesses along the rail line</i>
long	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg / Explore More Discovery Museum / Library</i>	<i>Consider branding of space between the museum and library, and integrate opportunities for play along the “off-network” paths and in new parks</i>
medium	<i>HDR / JMU / NENA / Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project</i>	<i>Create online materials and potential signage in Downtown to direct visitors</i>

GRAMMING

medium	<i>City of Harrisonburg / Arts Council</i>	<i>Create a 1% for Art Program to generate resources</i>
medium	<i>HDR / volunteers</i>	<i>4-5 people dedicated to Downtown events - the team should be supported with an annual budget Create a simple how-to document to plan for a</i>
short	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>Downtown event and identify key spaces suitable for programming. Create a call for ideas to solicit resident suggestions</i>
short	<i>HDR / Arts Council / City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>Look to install temporary art in the first 2 years</i>
medium	<i>HDR / Arts Council / City of Harrisonburg / private property owner</i>	<i>First steps are to identify the right surface and engage a designer to bring this idea to life</i>
medium	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg / Rockingham County</i>	<i>Plan to coincide with a major event</i>
as needed	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR / business owners</i>	<i>Test the approach along with an existing major Downtown event</i>
as needed	<i>City of Harrisonburg / Department of Public Transportation / HDR / community organizations</i>	<i>Replicate past efforts to ensure equitable access to Downtown programming and destinations. Partner with community organizations to make sure people know about the temporary increase in transit service.</i>

DIVERSIFY DOWNTOWN'S BUSINESS ECOSYSTEM

13 CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE FOCUS ON LOCAL BUSINESS

Develop programs to increase participation by Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant/refugee, disabled, and women-owned businesses \$25,000

Create a tenant improvement program to provide move-in ready spaces to interested tenants \$150,000-\$250,000

Expand pop-up and shared-space strategies for local makers and entrepreneurs TBD

14 DON'T REQUIRE RETAIL (INCLUDING RESTAURANTS) EVERYWHERE WITH NEW DEVELOPMENT

Encourage a creative mix of uses to activate ground floor spaces N/A

Fill gaps between hubs of commercial activity through collaborations with the local arts community \$50,000

Form a partnership with an area institution to bring a commercial kitchen / food incubator to Downtown with sliding scale prices to ensure that it is financially feasible TBD

15 BUILD THE MARKET BY ATTRACTING MORE RESIDENTS AND MORE VISITORS

Increase marketing capacity; target newcomers from near and far \$50,000

Coordinate with local universities TBD

**TIME-
FRAME****KEY
PARTNERS****NOTES ON
EARLY ACTION**

short	<i>HDR / B-Cubed / NENA / Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project / JMU</i>	<i>Planning and staff time - more money will be needed to offer loans as the program develops</i>
long	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg / private property owners</i>	<i>Need to launch as a pilot to determine actual costs and identify willing property owners</i>
long	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg / private property owners</i>	<i>Need to launch as a pilot to determine actual costs and identify willing property owners</i>
short	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>Policy and zoning work</i>
medium	<i>HDR / Arts Council / private property owners</i>	<i>Art in storefront initiative</i>
long	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>Would need a feasibility study; create a pitch book</i>
medium	<i>HDR / City of Harrisonburg</i>	<i>Staff time and research around marketing opportunities</i>
medium	<i>HDR / JMU / EMU</i>	<i>Dedicated outreach and programming for students and faculty</i>

GROW DOWNTOWN AS A NEIGHBORHOOD

16 ENCOURAGE MIXED-USE AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AFFORDABLE FOR A RANGE OF PRICEPOINTS IN KEY CLUSTERS

South Downtown

Flanking Federal Street

TBD - depends on overall program and development

17 IN THE LONG-TERM, SEEK OPPORTUNITIES TO ADD DENSITY AND IMPROVE THE URBAN DESIGN AT KEY DOWNTOWN SITES

Improve and activate the north end of Downtown

\$100,000

Upgrade housing conditions in the south end of Downtown

N/A

INTEGRATE DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE

18 INTEGRATE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT INTO SURFACE PARKING LOTS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

\$30-\$40K

19 BUILD NEW PARKING RESOURCES TO FREE UP KEY SITES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Move forward with a new municipal deck behind the Public Safety building

\$12,500,000

Pursue PPPs to catalyze the creation of additional parking garages

TBD

Encourage shared parking

N/A

Incorporate electric vehicle parking

N/A

20 EXPLORE SHARED SANITATION SOLUTIONS, LIKE ROANOKE'S SEALED TRASH COMPACTORS

\$75,000

**TIME-
FRAME**

**KEY
PARTNERS**

**NOTES ON
EARLY ACTION**

medium - long	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / developers	Depends on approach - City led initiatives include land assembly, groundwork for public-private partnerships, and issuing RFP to developers. Privately led components include testing design concepts, navigating zoning, and waiting for the market
short	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / private property owners / NENA	Create easy to follow commercial design guidelines, install plantings for stormwater and integrate public art where possible
short	City of Harrisonburg	Maintain a list of nuisance properties and advocate for a greater density and range of housing options to replace out of date housing where appropriate

short	City of Harrisonburg / HDR / private property owners	Identify pilot site; hire engineering firm to do hydrologic analysis to understand volume of water and size green stormwater infrastructure appropriately; then hire landscape architect to design rain garden, followed by contractor to build
long	City of Harrisonburg / private developer	For a 500 space garage
medium	City of Harrisonburg / private developer	Exact program for the Water Street deck to be determined with interested private developers
---	City of Harrisonburg	Policy initiative
---	City of Harrisonburg	Policy initiative
medium	City of Harrisonburg	For pilot project, new trash compactors and screening

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Raise and allocate funds for long-term capital improvements	Project by project
Launch a Downtown Challenge Grant Program	TBD
Transition the Steering Committee to an Implementation Committee	N/A
Develop an early-action strategy for the coming year(s)	N/A

**TIME-
FRAME**

**KEY
PARTNERS**

**NOTES ON
EARLY ACTION**

ongoing	<i>City of Harrisonburg / private property owners</i>	<i>Fundraising and budget allocation for specific projects</i>
long	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR / Community Foundation / private donors</i>	<i>Establish a fundraising goal for the Community Foundation to allocate toward implementation of</i>
short	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>Downtown 2040. An initial goal of \$1-2 million would be ideal</i>
short	<i>City of Harrisonburg / HDR</i>	<i>This should happen within 6 months This should be the first task of the new Implementation Committee</i>

