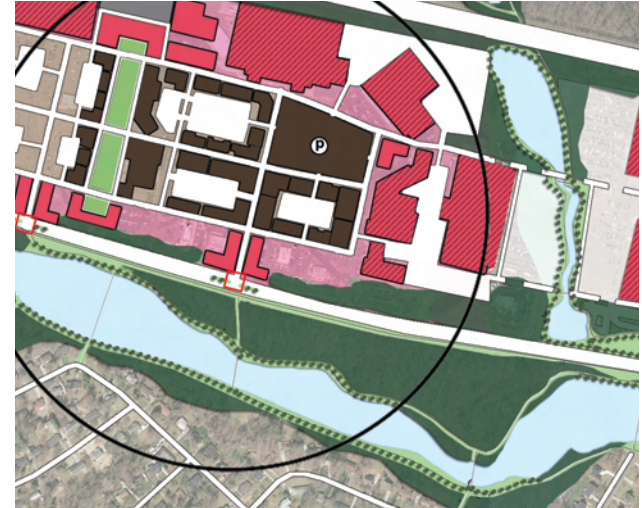
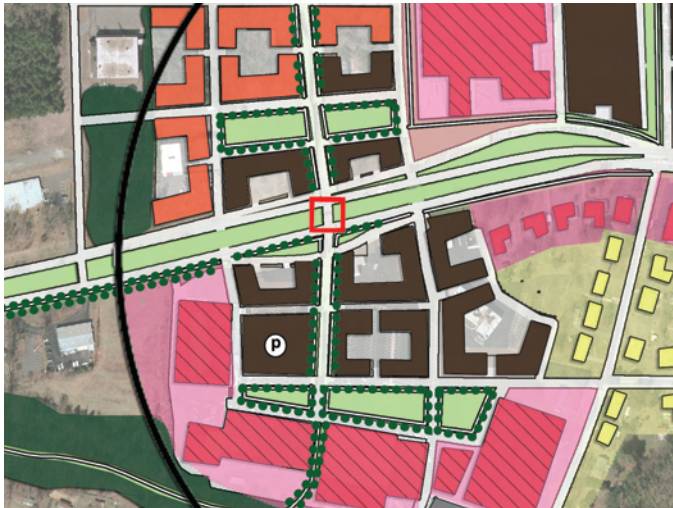


FRANKLIN BOULEVARD CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN



October 2007

prepared for:



prepared by:



RENAISSANCE PLANNING GROUP

In association with
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Clarion Associates



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I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aerial view of Franklin Boulevard, looking west, towards downtown Gastonia



Introduction

The Franklin Boulevard corridor in Gastonia is both a gateway and center to the history, culture, and economic fortunes of the city. Its success as a community focal point, as well as a through-route, depends on creating a lively mix of civic and cultural spaces, places where people are comfortable walking, and design elements that convey a sense of arrival. The corridor should connect the adjacent neighborhoods and downtown along it, rather than serve as a barrier between them.

In August 2006, the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) contracted with Renaissance Planning Group to prepare a corridor study and master plan for the Franklin Boulevard corridor from Redbud Drive at the municipal line with Lowell on the east through downtown to the municipal line at Barney Castle Road on the west side. The study area includes properties within 1/4 mile of Franklin Boulevard on both the north and south side of the roadway. From an access and connectivity perspective, the consultant team examined a broader travel demand market that included most of the city of Gastonia and immediately surrounding areas.

The goal of the Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study and Master Plan is to integrate the land use, transportation, and urban design elements along the corridor in a manner that fosters redevelopment and

improved personal mobility. What is now a disconnected hodgepodge of aging hotels, stately churches, fenced-off industrial uses, vacant storefronts, institutional land uses, as well as new suburban retail and residential development can be transformed into a cohesive, interconnected corridor that includes a mix of residential, commercial and open space that enhances the surrounding areas. This Master Plan serves as a guide for the community to complete that transformation in a manner that unifies the corridor while celebrating the unique character and history within each segment along it.

A Community-Driven Plan

The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan is driven by the concerns, ideas and vision expressed by the public and key stakeholders at multiple meetings, personal interviews, design workshops and other forums held over the last year. The three public community design workshops drew between 60 and 80 participants collectively, representing the diverse interests and perspectives along this nine mile corridor. Figure 1 illustrates the process flow of how public input guided the identification of key issues, analysis and recommendations.

The workshops functioned as key milestones to verify that the plan was on the right track with the community and to refine the master plan to best

match local preferences. Community members studied aerial maps of the corridor, drew their own concepts, identified and selected their priorities. At the 2nd and 3rd design workshops, participants analyzed a range of design and transportation options, and conveyed which elements they supported and did not support. This master plan is, in great measure, a reflection of those issues, ideas and preferences.



Figure 1



Community Context

Gastonia, like the rest of Gaston County on the western edge of the Charlotte metropolitan region along I-85, is poised for rapid growth. Much of the growth that previously occurred in the suburban ring areas of western Mecklenburg County, beyond the Charlotte Douglas International Airport, is now leaping across the Catawba River into the previously undeveloped areas of Gaston County, where land costs have historically been cheaper.

The Charlotte metro area is expected to add nearly 400,000 people over the next 20 years. With downtown Gastonia a relatively short 20-30 minute commute to the Charlotte CBD and airport, Franklin Boulevard offers an authentic and historic urban environment that, if positioned well, could attract a sizable percentage of that regional growth to capitalize on revitalization efforts.

The challenge and opportunity for the downtown and in-town neighborhoods of Gastonia is to redirect some of this growth to the urban core and established corridors in the form of quality redevelopment that fits the character of each community along the Franklin Boulevard corridor. From discussions with people living and working in the area, it is imperative that redevelopment occurs in a way that improves safety, enhances access and mobility along the corridor, and provides for

an economically vital future that respects the past and each neighborhood's unique identity.

An examination of vacant and redevelopable lands within a 1/4 mile on either side of Franklin Boulevard in the study corridor revealed a future growth potential of 2,250 additional dwelling units and 5,000 new jobs by 2030, assuming no change in land use, based on data from the Gaston MPO transportation model. That's in addition to the 12,600 dwelling units and 23,600 jobs from existing and approved development in the corridor. This represents a growth increase of approximately 18 percent, largely following a typical suburban form of growth. Under this trend, the highest growth is expected on the eastern and western ends of the corridor, forming a "barbell" shape to the growth along the corridor (Figure 2).

This growth in the corridor, when combined with regional growth elsewhere in Gaston County and surrounding areas, could mean numerous additional daily vehicle trips on the Franklin Boulevard corridor by 2030. These growth projections, as well as the incident management overflow requirements of I-85, were taken into careful consideration in developing the recommendations for the Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan.

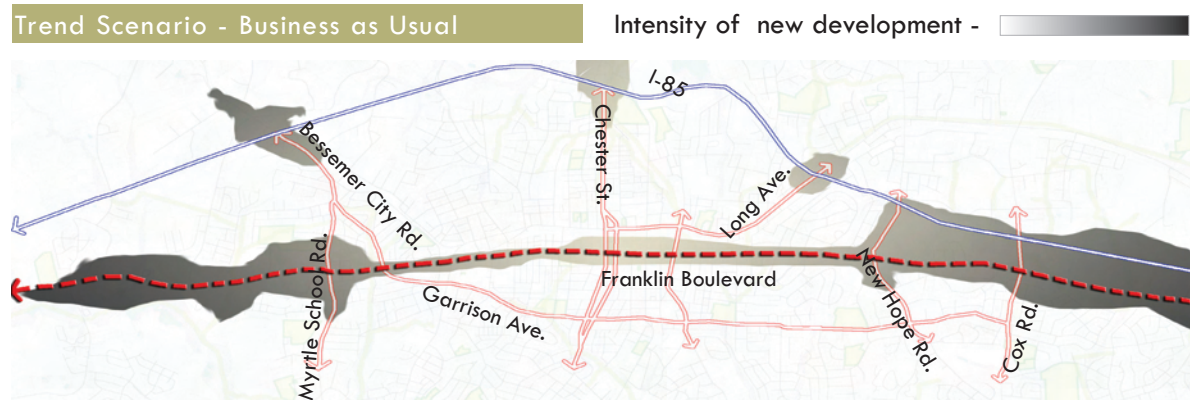
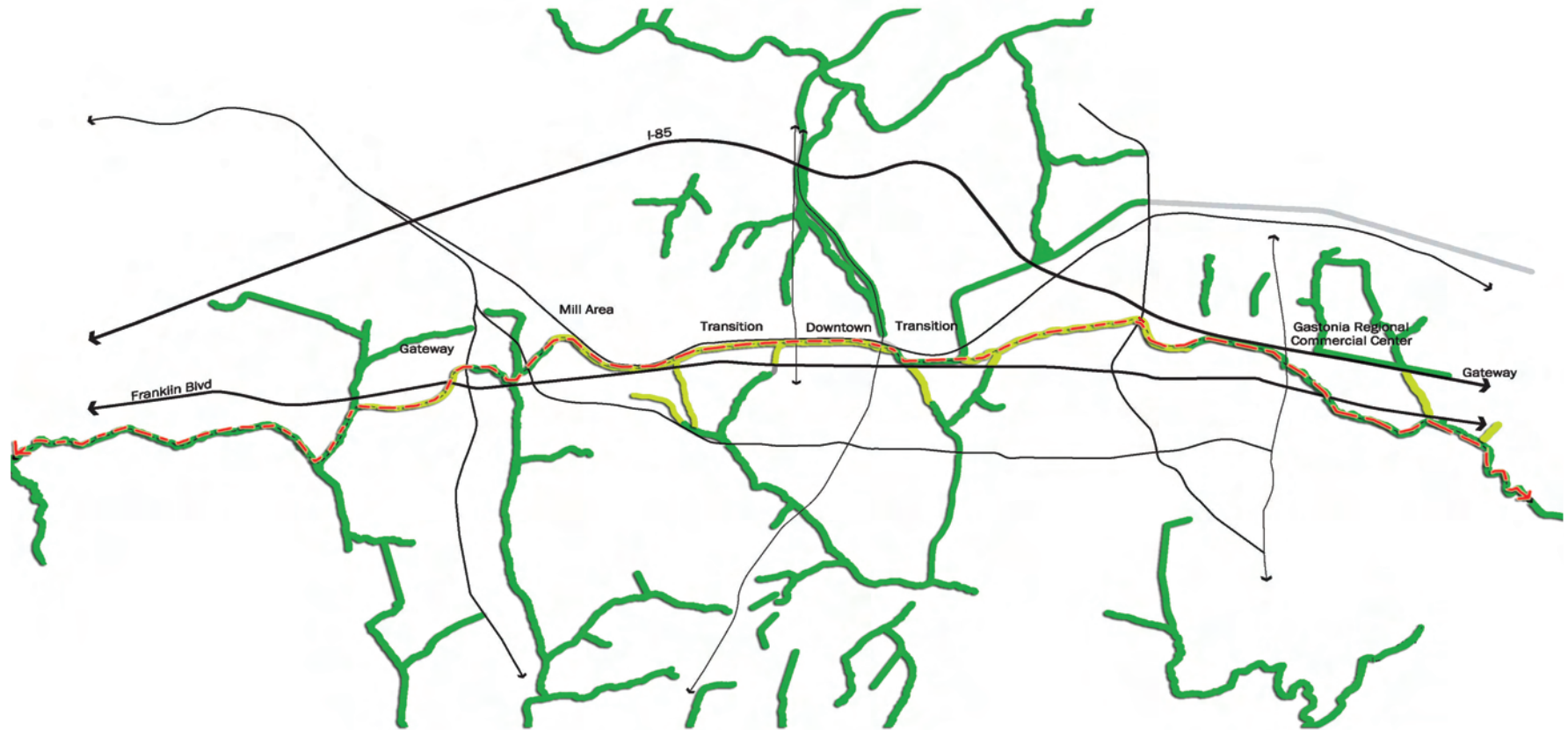


Figure 2



- Proposed Greenways
- Proposed Greenway Extensions
- Primary Greenway Trail

Mobility Choices

Place-making is the art of putting together land use, design and street elements to create physical change that allows people to perceive their environment anew as a destination and civic gathering place. The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan builds on the unique and distinguishing assets all along Franklin Boulevard in Gastonia – unique views, a vibrant mix of historic buildings and adjacent neighborhoods, abundant places of worship, and iconic local establishments – to create a stronger linkage between physical conditions, community values and a vision for the future.

A challenge for the community is those outstanding, unique assets are not clearly visible or inviting from the roadway. There are glimpses and teases of what could be one of the Piedmont’s most vibrant real urban corridors offering a mix of places to live, work and play, but they are juxtaposed with decaying buildings, industrial land uses, abandoned lots and acres of empty asphalt (parking lots). It’s the job of this master plan to link these places together and create a unifying theme that reinforces the sense of history and promise for the future of the corridor as an attractive, attainable and rewarding place for people and businesses.

Given the length of the Franklin Boulevard corridor, and its dual role of providing regional mobility and a local destination for commerce, worship and entertainment, the best way to draw these linkages

is by creating walkable districts and opportunities to draw people from the community to specific places along the corridor. To accomplish the overall vision and goals, other means of mobility must be considered and planned. The City and MPO have a good framework in place for mobility that considers a mix of greenways and transit options in the future. In order to realistically meet the demands required for the expenditure of money on infrastructure that both modes need, the Franklin Boulevard corridor must redevelop in a manner that can support these initiatives.

This Master Plan envisions building upon the existing Greenways Plan by connecting the various links into a parallel corridor to Franklin Boulevard. This cohesive link will provide an alternative mode of mobility along the corridor and connect the adjacent neighborhoods to destinations along the corridor where it intersects with the greenways.

In addition, the City is interested in an eventual dedicated transit service connecting Gastonia to the airport and downtown Charlotte. Different modes of transit require different densities for ideal operating capacities (see Figure 3). Downtown Gastonia’s distance from the Charlotte CBD or international airport is ideal for commuter rail. Existing infrastructure is largely in place for such service if operating agreements and costs can be worked out at the regional level.

If the corridor can develop multiple nodes of relatively high density and intensity of land uses, a long term goal of developing light rail in the Franklin Boulevard corridor is not unreasonable.

In the near term, a downtown-oriented trolley along with continued enhancements to the existing regional express bus route connecting Gastonia and Charlotte can expand travel choices and complement redevelopment efforts. This Master Plan begins to lay out a land use and design framework for redeveloping key points along Franklin Boulevard into future transit oriented developments.

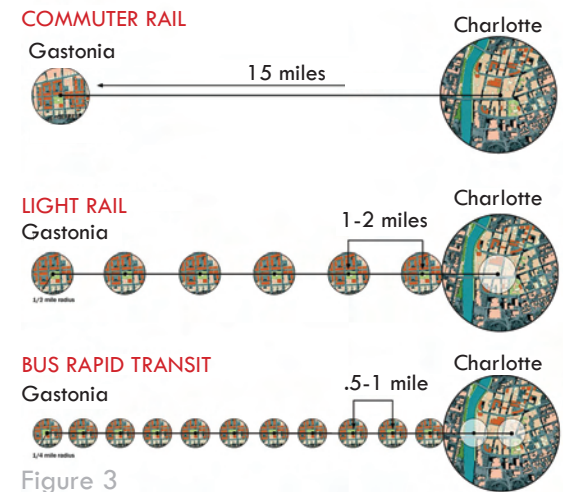
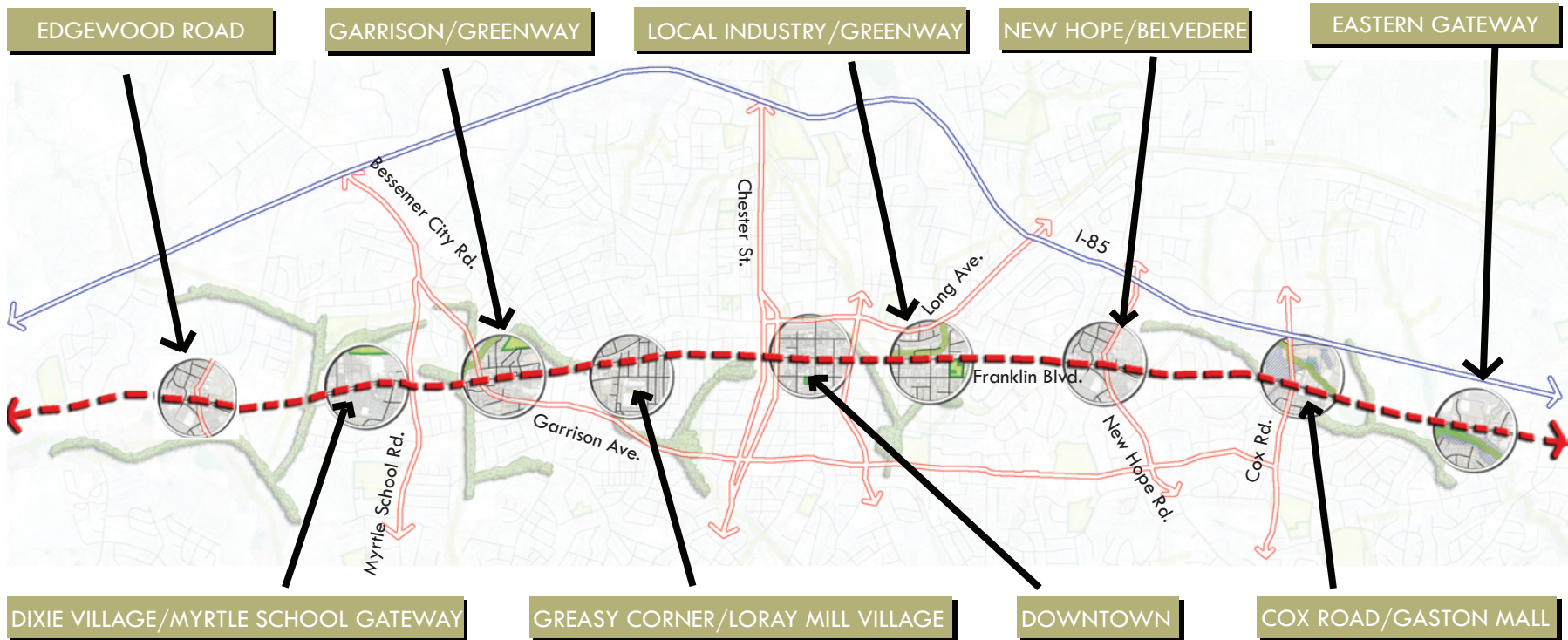


Figure 3

CONNECTIVITY



Pulses of Redevelopment - 

Master Plan Vision

This vision for the Franklin Boulevard corridor is to create places of distinction at key points along the corridor that enhance its character, strengthen the City's economic vitality and expand opportunities to attract residents, visitors and workers by increasing accessibility. These community focal points build upon existing issues and opportunities to create mixed use places that encourage walking, cycling, and use of transit; it can also serve as a source of civic pride and economic vitality within the community.

The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan is focused on the following community design goals:

1. Enhance connectivity while preserving capacity.
2. Capitalize on existing character and unique assets for redevelopment.
3. Create pedestrian oriented destinations and districts.
4. Increase multi-modal opportunities.

This is a long-range 40-50 year vision for redevelopment of Franklin Boulevard. Franklin Boulevard did not deteriorate overnight. For a variety of economic and social reasons, it took over 40 years for the corridor to decline. With that knowledge comes the reality that positive change, which reflects the community's vision, will also not happen overnight. However, there are many relatively low cost, near-term improvements that the

City and its partners can undertake that will serve as catalysts to the revitalization of this important gateway that links the City's past, present and future.

The Corridor Plan defines specific "pulses" or nodes of development that can serve as gateways, activity centers, and hubs for existing and planned transit services. To ensure that the remake of the Franklin Boulevard corridor is manageable, the City should target its capital improvement program toward addressing the recommendations of one key node at a time. This would have the advantage of demonstrating measurable progress toward the corridor's transformation in keeping with the master plan vision. In parallel, the City can define the specific overlay district boundaries, criteria and other regulatory strategies for other areas along Franklin Boulevard.

The following pages present the Master Plan summary for the four primary pulses, or focal points, of redevelopment along the corridor, highlighting the differing character of existing and proposed key points. These include a suburban commercial center (Eastern Gateway), the historic Downtown, the close-nit community surrounding the mill villages (Greasy Corner/Loray Mill Village) and the rural to suburban transition along the western approach into Gastonia (Dixie Village/ Myrtle School Gateway).

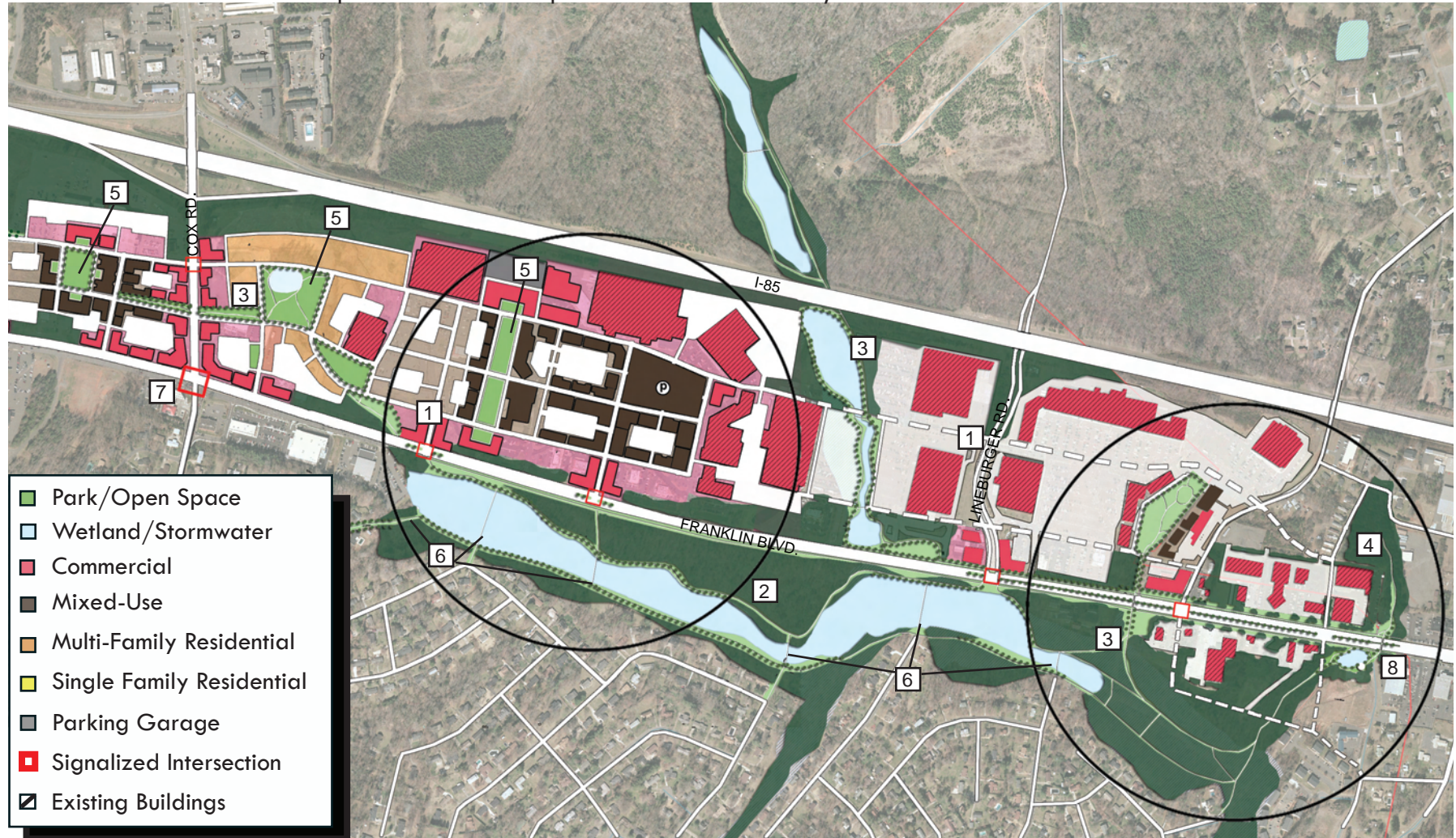
With market forces guiding new development on the eastern segment of the corridor and existing economic and civic destinations driving the revitalization of downtown, public efforts to improve the corridor should begin on the western segment. With relatively little private investment and continuing concerns about crime, blight and urban decline, the western portion of the corridor from Shannon-Bradley Road to Myrtle School Road needs immediate attention. The catalyst for its transformation could be the redevelopment of the Firestone Mill/Loray Village site. The City can therefore capitalize on historic preservation funding assistance, private market interest, proximity to downtown and excellent regional accessibility to use this location as a catalyst for corridor-wide change.



Greasy Corner enhancement









EASTERN GATEWAY

Mixed Use Infill Redevelopment with Transportation + Greenway Networks



Circles equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk

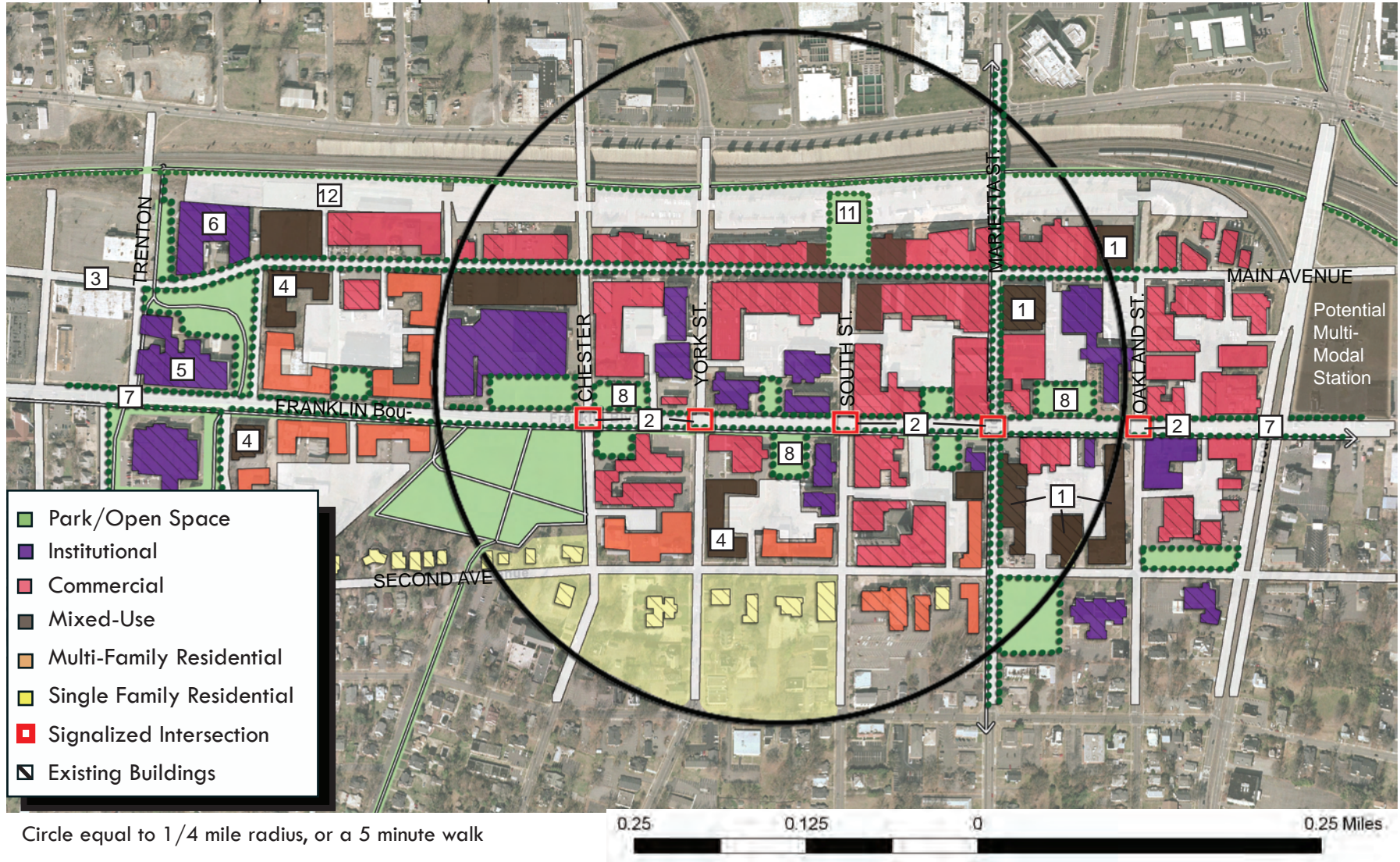
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Create a parallel street network north of Franklin Boulevard to connect various parcels and ease traffic on Franklin.		Phase II (6-10 years)	transportation plan
2	Create a park or open space on the parcel south of Franklin Boulevard between the street and the stream/wetland.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan
3	Develop multi-use greenway trails along riparian corridors. One example is the branch running north from Franklin Boulevard underneath I-85. This branch would provide connections between undeveloped property north of I-85 to Franklin Commons and Lineberger Road.		Long Term (10+ years)	greenway plan
4	Develop a multi-use trail spur from the riparian corridor to the Franklin Blvd. gateway intersection at the town boundary with Lowell.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
5	Create civic open space within re-developed commercial properties such as Franklin Commons and the Gaston Mall.		Long Term (10+ years)	zoning change
6	Provide pedestrian connections from residential neighborhoods south of Franklin Blvd., across new park, to intersections with existing intersections into Franklin Commons.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
7	Improve intersections along Franklin Boulevard at: Cox Rd., Franklin Commons, Lineberger Rd., and Church St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	intersection imp.
8	Create gateway into Gastonia from Lowell with pedestrian bridge and signage spanning Franklin Boulevard at the municipal limit.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan

 Public  Private  Partnership

DOWNTOWN

Mixed Use Redevelopment and Open Space Infill



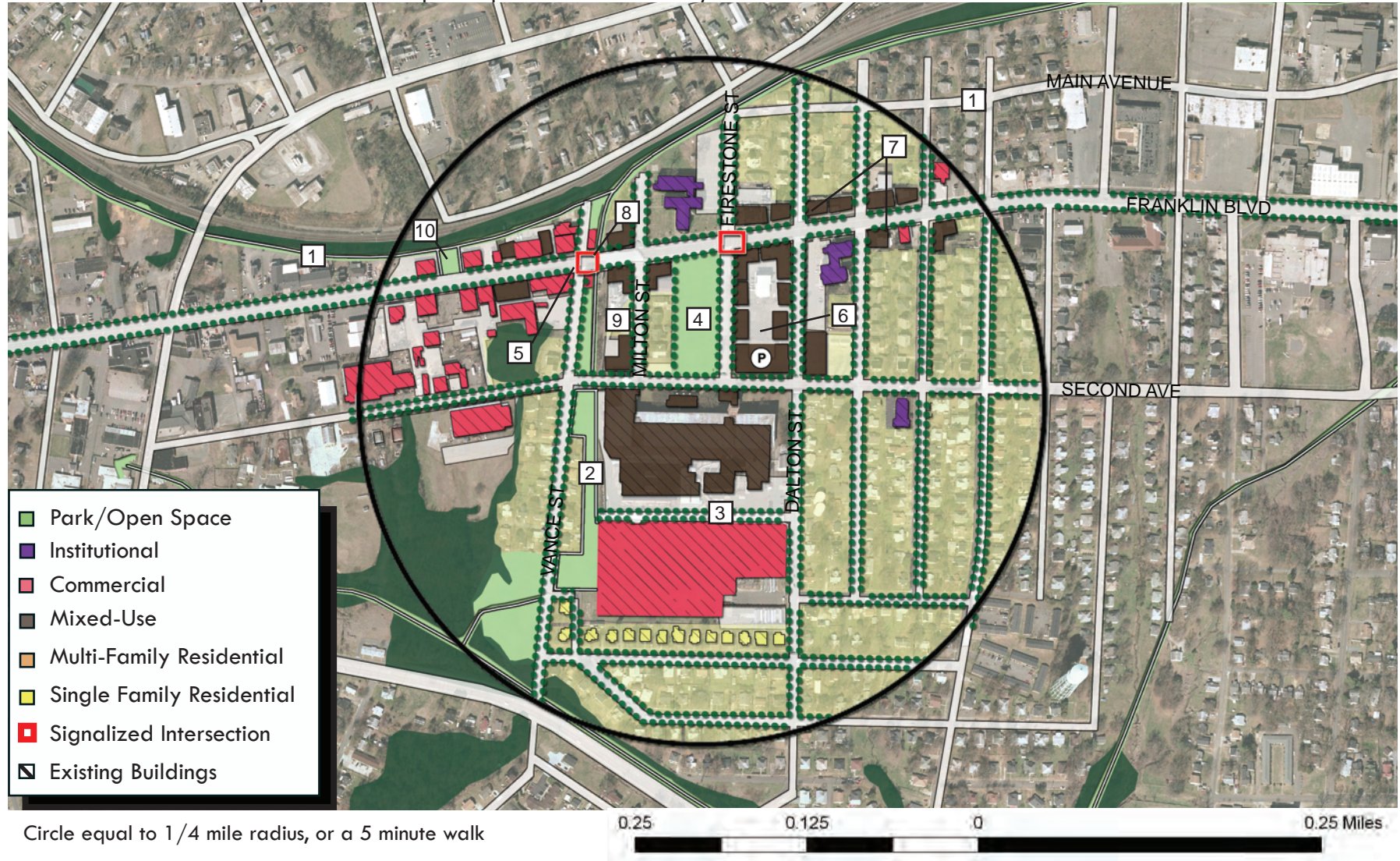
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Mixed Use (Commercial Retail + Office) Developments (~ 40,000 to 50,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
2	Intersection Improvements to enhance pedestrian connectivity across Franklin Blvd. at Oakland St., Marietta St., South St., York St., and Chester St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	intersection imp.
3	Multi Use Trails on Main Ave. through the Downtown Area.		Phase II (6-10 years)	transportation plan
4	Mixed Use (Residential + Retail) Development - SE corner of Franklin Blvd. and Clay St. (~150,000 to 200,000 sq.ft.) (includes rehabilitation of Armory building) - SE corner of Main Ave. and Clay St. (approx. 50,000 sq.ft.) - NE corner of Second Ave. and York St. (approx. 45,000 sq.ft.)		Long term (10+ years)	z o n i n g change
5	Community Art Center on Franklin Blvd. between Clay St. and Tremont St. (~ 60,000 sq.ft.)		Long term (10+ years)	NA
6	Art Galleries and other art related amenities on NE corner of Second Ave. and Tremont St. (approx. 40,000 sq.ft.)		Long term (10+ years)	NA
7	Gateway Signage into Downtown from East (Broad St.) and West (Trenton St.) on Franklin Blvd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
8	Civic open spaces along Franklin Blvd. - Between Oakland St. and Marietta St. (~ 180,000 sq.ft.) - Between York St. and Chester St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	facilities plan
9	Downtown Trolley Service to Loray Mill.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
10	Pedestrian improvements on Franklin Blvd. in Downtown.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
11	South Street Park along railroad track on S. South St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan
12	Additional parking along railroad tracks between Trenton St. and Chester St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	parking regs.
13	Expand Downtown National Register Historic District.		Phase II (6-10 years)	historic preservation

Public Private Partnership











GREASY CORNER/ LORAY MILL VILLAGE

Mixed Use Redevelopment with Open Space + Greenway Network



Circle equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk

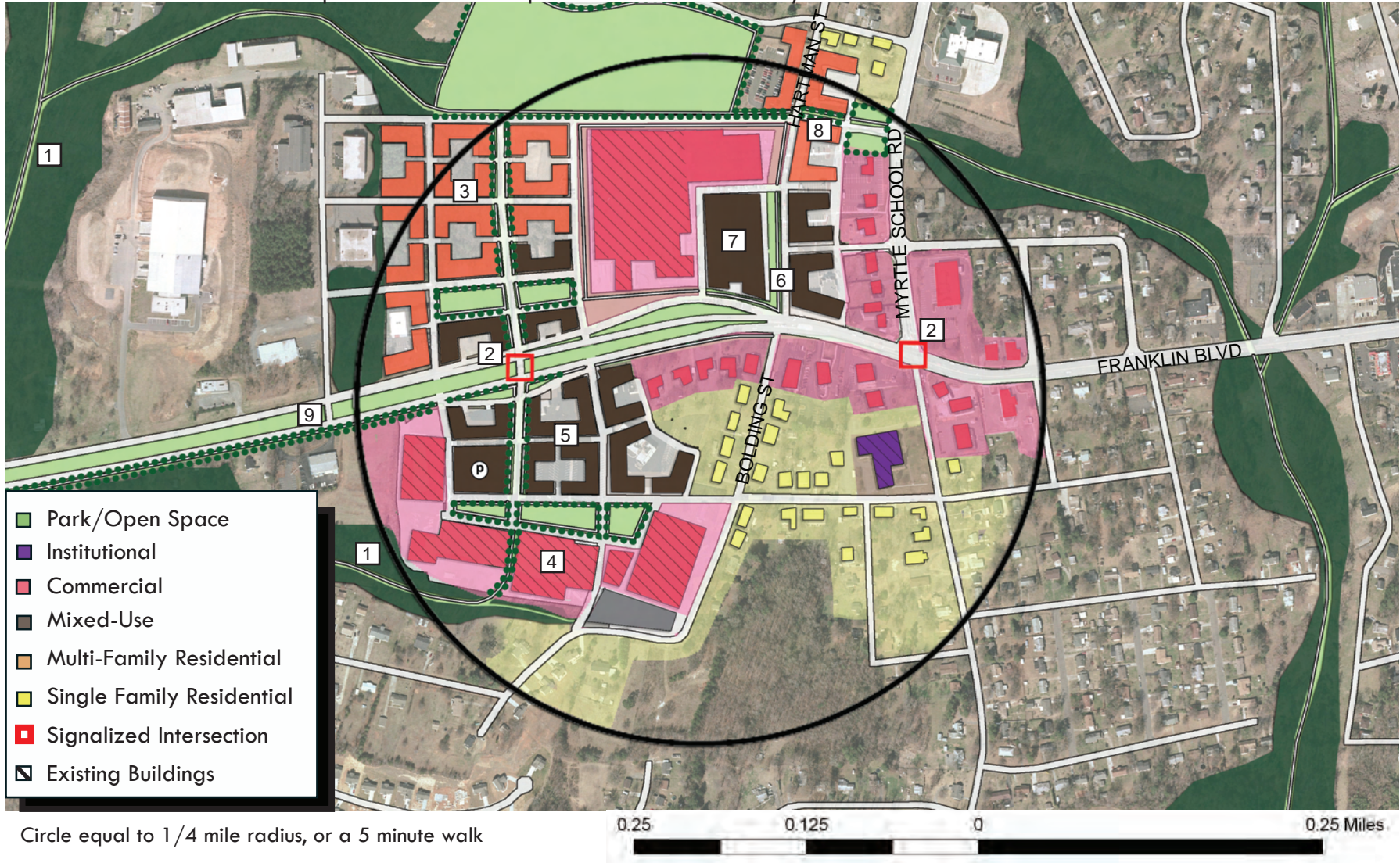
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Develop mixed use trail along W. Main Ave. from downtown connecting to Dixie Village via Webb St. School.		Phase I (1-5 years)	greenway plan
2	Develop multi-use trail spur from main trail along RR between Milton and Vance to the proposed greenway trail running along the stream adjacent to Garrison Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
3	Develop local street network adjacent to Loray Mill property, with same block dimensions as surrounding mill village.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
4	Create civic open space between Franklin Blvd. and 2nd Ave., adjacent to Firestone St. (approximately 45,000 square feet).		Phase II (6-10 years)	facilities plan
5	Re-establish “Greasy Corner” at intersection of Vance and Franklin Blvd. by narrowing Franklin Boulevard from 6 to 4 lanes. Widened sidewalks and facade grants would help to offset the removal of building fronts during a prior expansion of Franklin Blvd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
6	Encourage infill mixed-use residential redevelopment of block bounded by Franklin Blvd., Firestone Street, 2nd Ave., and Dalton St.		Long term (10+ years)	zoning change
7	Mixed-use Commercial/residential redevelopment on underutilized parcels along Franklin Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
8	New signalization at Vance and Franklin to allow for greenway crossing.		Phase II (6-10 years)	intersection imp.
9	Infill new single family housing along Milton St. and Ransom St. on vacant parcels.		Long term (10+ years)	zoning change
10	Develop trailhead/pocket park with parking adjacent to multi-use trail on north side of Franklin Blvd. between Vance St. and Linwood Rd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan










 Public  Private  Partnership

DIXIE VILLAGE/ MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD GATEWAY

Mixed Use Infill Redevelopment with Transportation + Greenway Networks



KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

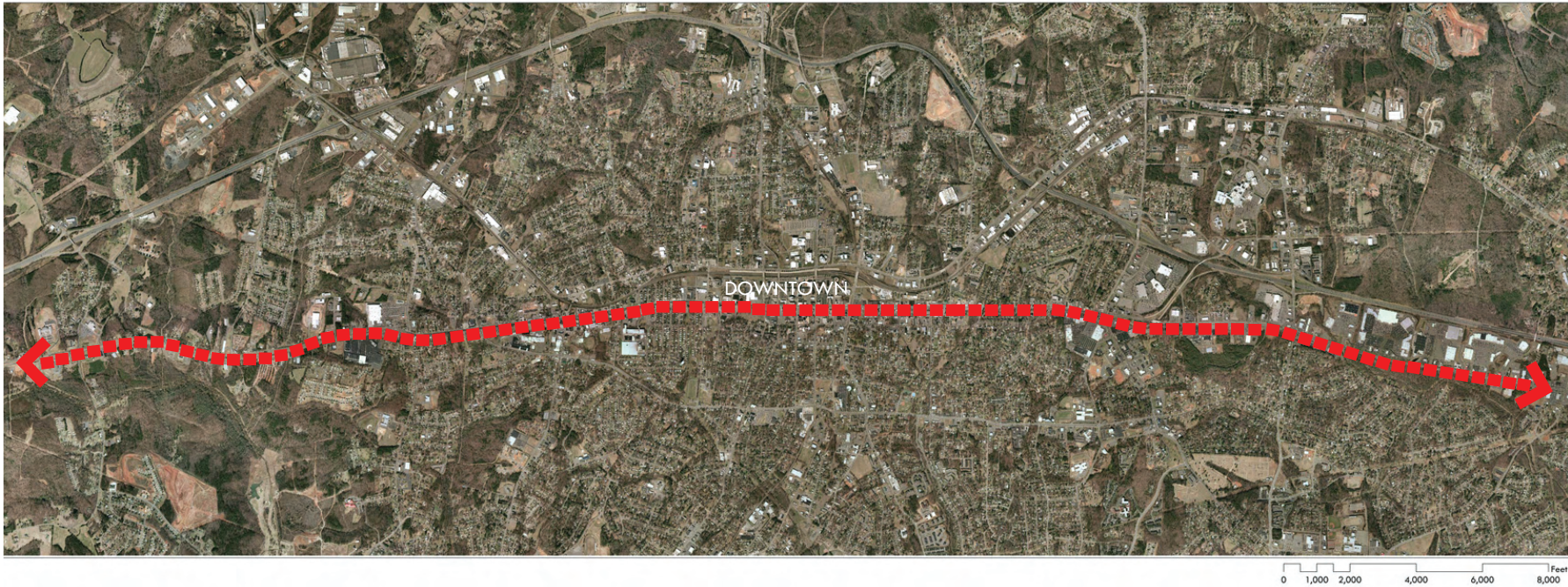
1	Multi-use trail on south and north sides of Franklin Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
2	Intersection improvements at Franklin Blvd. and Myrtle School Rd. and at the entrance to redeveloped Dixie Village.		Phase I (1-5 years)	intersection imp.
3	Residential development (~ 32 acres with 8 to 12 dwelling units/acre) with neighborhood retail (approx. 30,000 sq.ft.) and open space (~45,000 sq. ft.) north of Franklin Blvd. and west of Wal-Mart.		Long term (10+ years)	zoning change
4	Renovation of Dixie Village Shopping Center as a lifestyle center (~ 300,000 sq. ft.) with additional structured parking facility (approx. 72,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	redevelopment
5	Mixed Use residential development (~ 40 acres with 4 to 8 dwelling units/acre) with neighborhood/community retail (~ 100,000 sq.ft.), open space (~ 52,500 sq.ft.) and structured parking (~ 130,000 sq.ft.) within the Dixie Village Shopping center site.		Long term (10+ years)	zoning change
6	Connect Bolding St. and Hartman St. through Walmart site.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
7	Structured parking facility for Wal-Mart (approx. 240,000 sq.ft.) with convenience retail at ground level (approx. 15,000 sq.ft.)		Long term (10+ years)	parking regs.
8	Residential development (approx. 10 acres with 15 to 18 dwelling units/acre) along the connection of Bolding St. and Hartman St.		Long term (10+ years)	zoning change
9	Create landmark/public art marking entrance to Gastonia from the west.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan

 Public  Private  Partnership





EXISTING CONDITIONS



LEGEND

Franklin Boulevard ■■■■■

Figure 2.1 Gastonia aerial view

Overview

The Franklin Boulevard corridor in Gastonia is both a gateway and center to the history, culture, and economic fortunes of the city. Its success as a community focal point depends on creating a lively mix of civic and cultural spaces, places where people are comfortable walking, and design elements that convey a sense of arrival. The corridor should connect the adjacent neighborhoods and downtown with each other, rather than serve as a barrier between them.

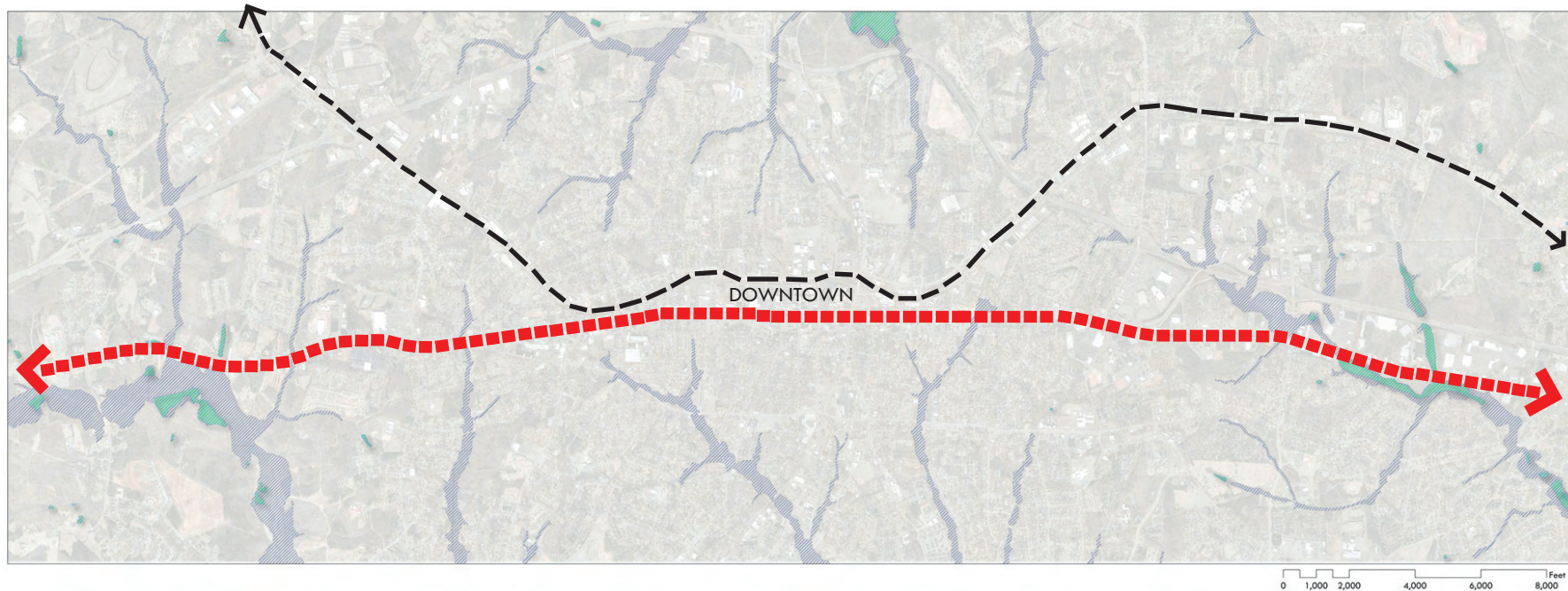
In August 2006, the Gaston Urban Area MPO contracted with Renaissance Planning Group to prepare a corridor study and master plan for the Franklin Boulevard corridor from Redbud Drive at the municipal line with Lowell on the east through downtown to the municipal line at Barney Castle Road on the west side. The study area includes properties within 1/4 mile of Franklin Boulevard on both the north and south side of the roadway.

The Franklin Boulevard corridor stretches approximately 9 miles east to west within the Gastonia city limits. It serves dual functions - both as a federally designated highway (US 29/NC 79) linking Charlotte and the Piedmont region with its western neighbors, as well as the historic center of the community, connecting different neighborhoods within the city to the downtown.

In order to help create a master plan for the corridor

that can continue to serve these dual functions now and in the future, it is important to understand the baseline conditions that have shaped the evolution of the boulevard. The following section describes the natural and human shaped conditions along the corridor. These conditions inform the character and potential of the recommendations that emerge from the corridor master plan.

In addition, the last section of this chapter summarizes through maps the input received at several public workshops identifying the major issues and opportunities found along the corridor. These ideas and feedback from the community and key stakeholders form the foundation upon which the corridor master plan recommendations rest.



LEGEND



- Flood Plains 
- Wetlands 
- Railroad 
- Franklin Boulevard 

Figure 2.2 Land Form + Hydrology

Land Form

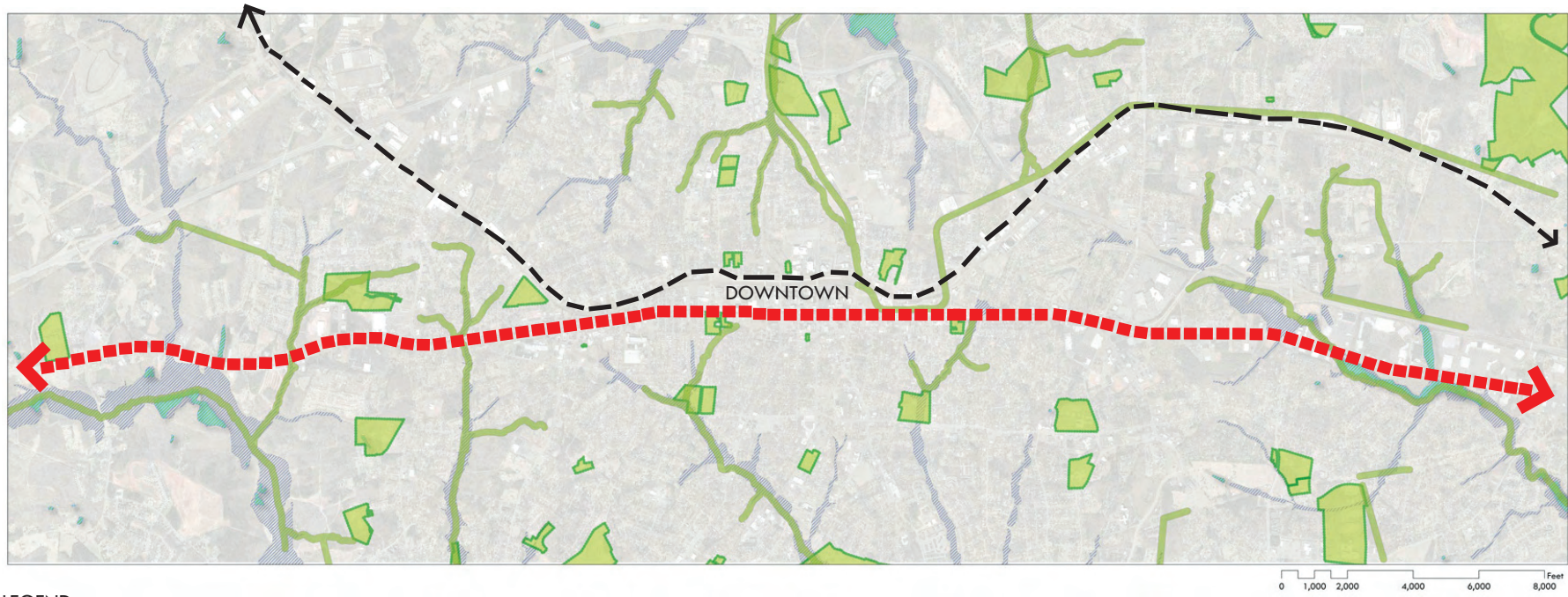
Franklin Boulevard follows a historic route through the headwaters of the Catawba River, connecting the cities of Belmont, Lowell, Gastonia, and Kings Mountain with Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to the east of the Catawba River. The historic center of Gastonia, its downtown, sits along a high point, or ridge, running east to west, that forms the boundary between the South Fork Catawba (Long Creek) watershed and the Upper Catawba (Catawba Creek) watershed.

Typical of early mill towns of its era, the P&N railroad ran along this ridge line, connecting Charlotte to Spartanburg and Greenville, South Carolina, then continuing on to Atlanta, Georgia. This route still functions as one of the busiest freight rail corridors in the southeast, and also serves as part of Amtrak's Crescent line. Future plans call for utilizing this corridor as part of the Southeast High Speed Rail corridor, linking Atlanta to Raleigh and beyond to Washington D.C. This future plan calls for an enhanced station stop in Gastonia. There are also preliminary discussions about possible commuter rail service along the corridor to link downtown Gastonia with employment destinations in Charlotte.

Hydrology

Unlike the railroad line, which sticks to the high ground along the ridge, Franklin Boulevard follows a more direct east-west route. As such, the road crosses several flood plains and wetlands, as well as high points such as downtown and the Gardner Park neighborhood. The boulevard rises and falls as it traverses this landscape, starting at a low point on the east as it enters the city, then rising at the Gardner Park neighborhood before falling down to the industrial area east of downtown. It then rises again to parallel the rail line through the high point of downtown, before falling and rising again as it traverses the mill villages west of the downtown.

Therefore, the hydrology and land form shape Franklin Boulevard in a profound manner, giving it an undulating character of high points and prominent viewsheds as well as low points with significant wetlands.



LEGEND







- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Flood Plains |  | Open Space |  |
| Wetlands |  | Proposed Greenways |  |
| Railroad |  | | |
| Franklin Boulevard |  | | |

Figure 2.3 Open Space + Greenways

Open Space

Much of the formal open space (parks, ball fields, school yards, etc.) in Gastonia is located away from the corridor, found among the various residential neighborhoods north and south of Franklin Boulevard. With the exception of the cemetery at South Chester and Franklin Boulevard, the corridor functions as a primarily commercial spine, with residential areas sprinkled in at several locations.

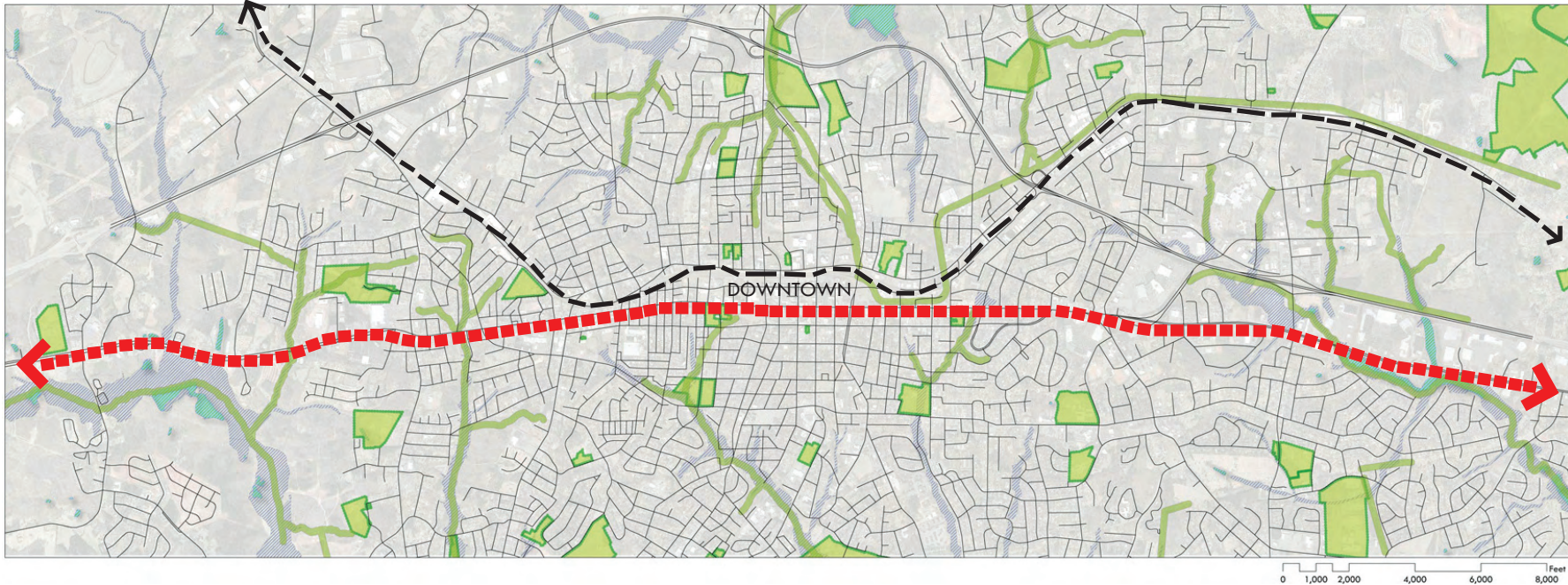
However, the decline and decay of some segments of the corridor have introduced places for “informal” open space (empty parking lots, abandoned building sites, etc.) that may be reconsidered as part of an open space network as the corridor redevelops.

Greenways

The City of Gastonia and Gaston County have identified key routes for creating a greenway network in the county. These proposed greenways mirror in many cases, the streams and floodplains found in the county. These greenways include off-road multi-use facilities, 8'-10' wide, that can accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians comfortably.

In several key locations, the proposed greenways intersect with Franklin Boulevard. These places represent important areas for “making visible” the greenway network to the users of Franklin Boulevard and providing a logical place for multi-modal, mixed use development.

Because the greenways typically follow the low lying hydric areas, they predominately run in a north-south orientation, without crossing the ridge line where the railroad lies. This master plan presents opportunities for extending the proposed greenways to connect the neighborhoods north and south of Franklin Boulevard, as well as envisions a greenway facility running east-west, parallel to Franklin Boulevard that connects the various proposed strands of greenway into a cohesive network.



LEGEND





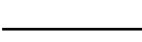
- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Flood Plains |  | Open Space |  |
| Wetlands |  | Proposed Greenways |  |
| Railroad |  | Streets |  |
| Franklin Boulevard |  | | |

Figure 2.4 Street Connectivity

Street Connectivity

A key function of place-making is street connectivity. Great places have well defined blocks and avenues that create an interconnected network for personal mobility. Older cities, such as Gastonia, often have some form of street connectivity that pre-dates the rise of the automobile as the primary means of personal mobility.

Newer areas of Gastonia, like other cities, are marked by less street connectivity and more disconnected arterials and residential streets. With less interconnection, the primary arterials in these places (such as Franklin Boulevard to the east and west of downtown Gastonia) become oversized in order to handle the traffic.

Along Franklin Boulevard downtown where there is greater street connectivity and parallel roadway facilities, the travel demand on the boulevard is less, allowing for a different cross-section. This corridor master plan looks at opportunities for enhancing the street network along and adjacent to Franklin Boulevard at key locations in order to improve the overall street connectivity.

It is interesting to note that the downtown area has the most street connectivity and the least amount of traffic congestion, which makes it well suited for appropriate redevelopment and new growth

that builds upon its urban character and historic legacy.

Along most of the corridor there are 6 lanes (3 in each direction). The exceptions to this profile are the segment of Franklin Boulevard downtown, from Broad Street to York Street, which consists of 5 lanes (2 each direction with a center turn lane) and the segment west of Myrtle School Road, which has 2 lanes in each direction separated by a wide median.

The volumes are well below the road's acceptable service volume given the number of lanes and traffic signals per mile. There is less congestion through downtown and on the western edge of the corridor, but delays at certain signalized intersections east of downtown and in the vicinity of Franklin Square. This contributes to a perception of traffic congestion along the corridor.

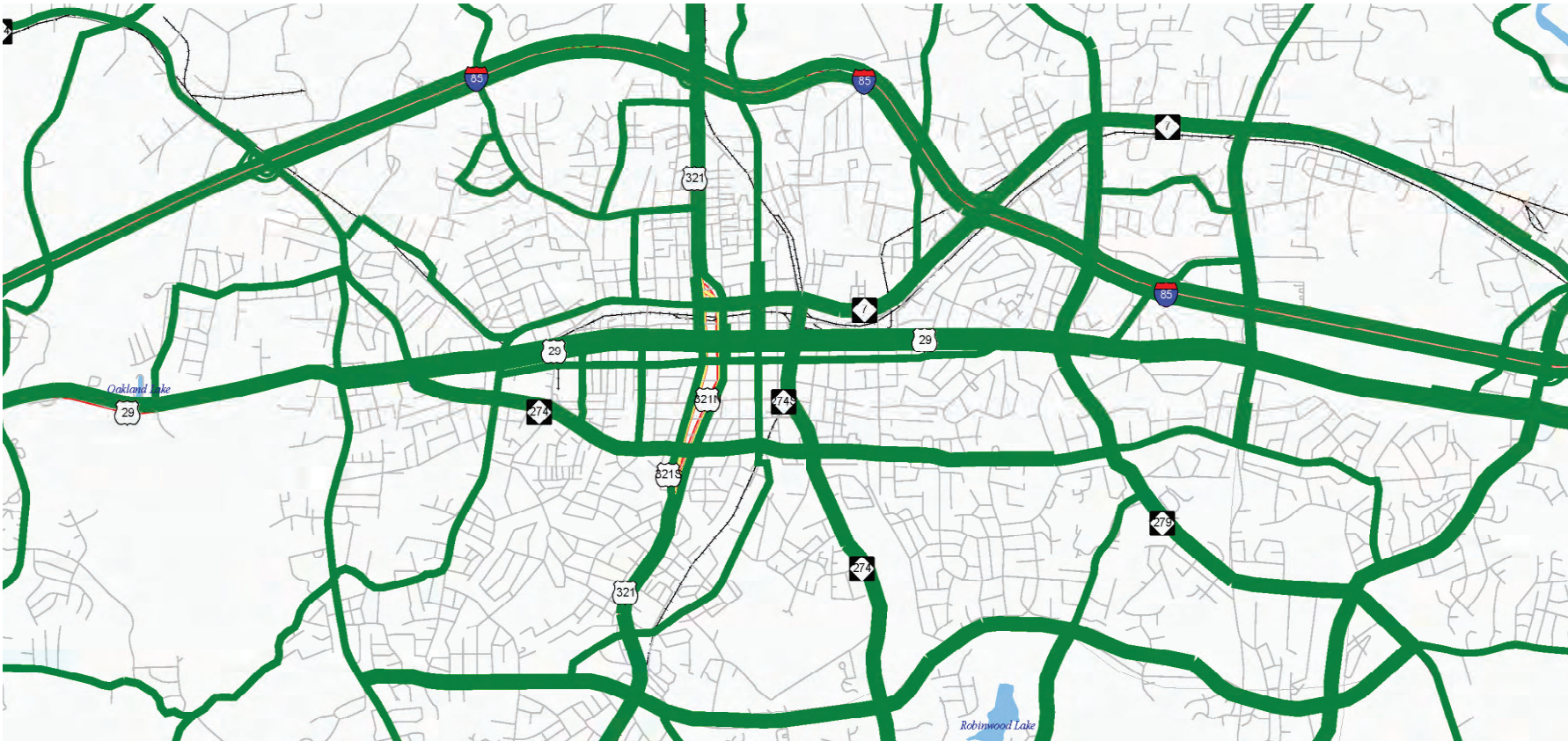


Figure 2.5 Travel Lanes Bandwith (2000)

Corridor Functionality

Franklin Boulevard is designated as a primary arterial through route that serves a variety of trip purposes and modes. As a federal-aid highway that is the primary reliever route for I-85 through Gaston County, Franklin Boulevard has been designed to accommodate a significant amount of truck traffic, which often occurs when incidents on the interstate force traffic to divert. While I-85 carries the vast majority of long-haul truck traffic, the legacy of industrial development and increasing level of new commercial development along Franklin Boulevard means that truck traffic will continue to be a major influence on local traffic conditions, access to businesses and turning movements at certain intersections.

While traffic volumes along the corridor are generally well below the theoretical capacity of the road, this daily presence of truck traffic contributes to delays during peak periods. In addition, the concentration of commercial and institutional activities along Franklin Boulevard on the eastern half of the corridor creates a situation in which local trips for convenience and shopping activities interact with commuter-oriented and regional trips traversing the corridor or accessing I-85. Because of floodplains, neighborhoods, the train tracks and land use patterns, this area of the city has relatively little street connectivity. For instance, many local shopping

trips must exit from one retail development onto Franklin Boulevard to access another destination a few blocks further away.

Franklin Boulevard is also a multi-modal corridor. Currently, Gastonia's transit agency operates routes #2 (Myrtle) and #7 (Westfield Mall/Franklin Square) that serve portions of the roadway. Express Route 85 provides peak hour service to downtown Charlotte along I-85. Routes converge at the transit center located at Main Avenue and Oakland St. The P&N rail line is an active freight corridor that was buried in a large ditch through downtown Gastonia several decades ago because the long freight trains caused access problems getting into and out of the downtown area.

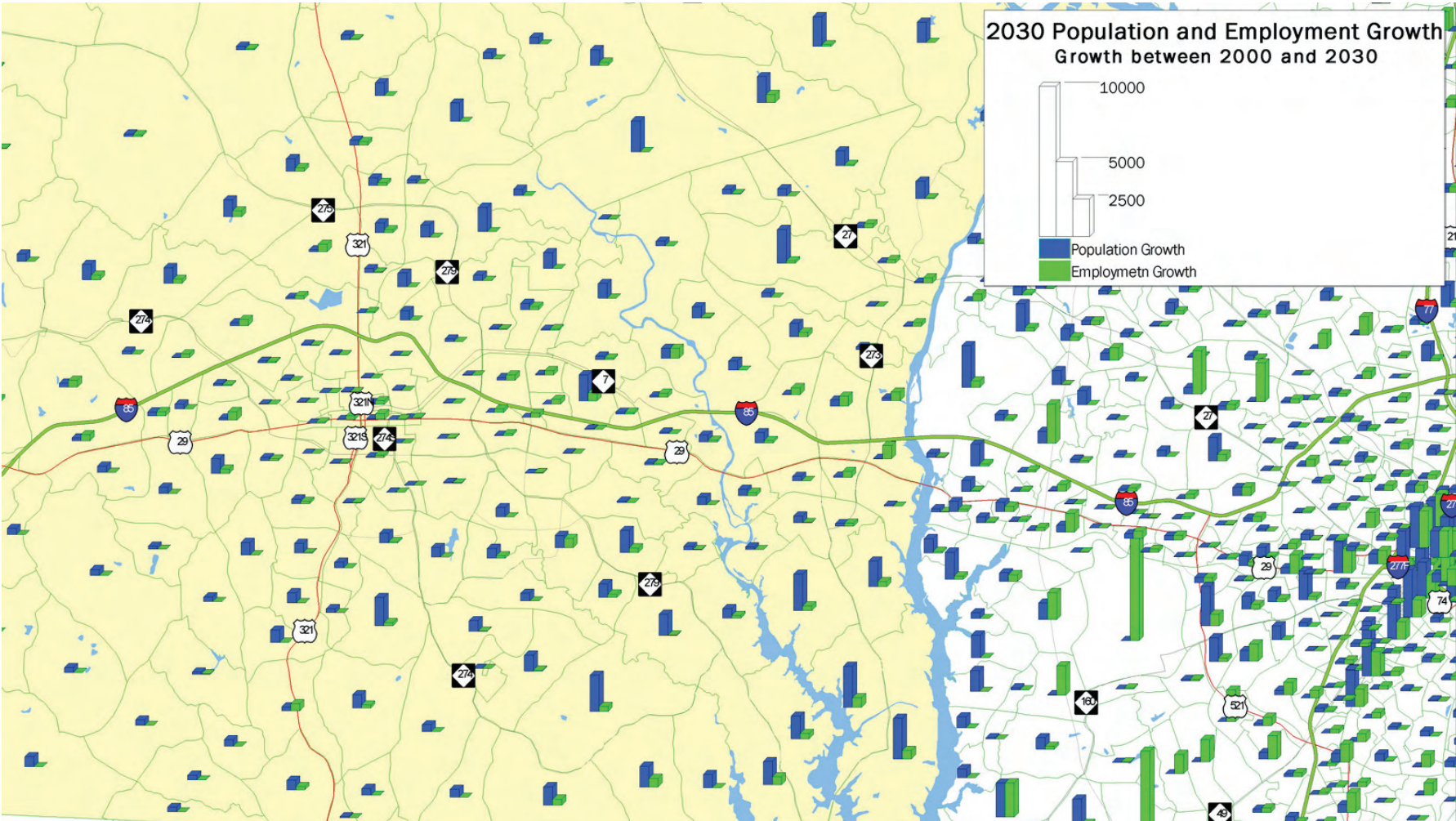


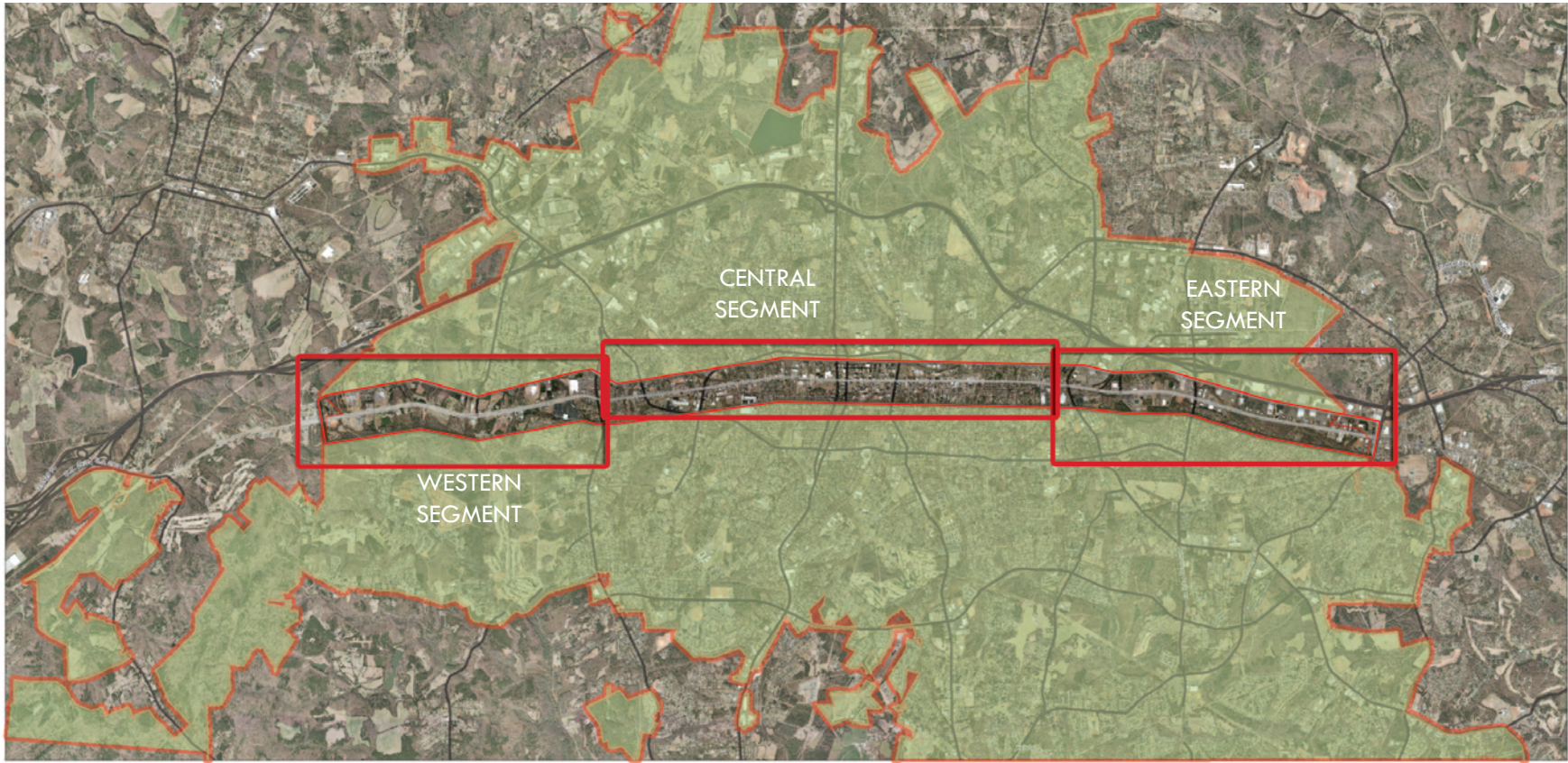
Figure 2.5 Population + Employment Growth

Demographics

Gastonia sits within the fast growing Greater Charlotte region. The western portion of Mecklenburg County has seen significant employment and residential growth, fueled in part by the Charlotte Douglas International Airport and easy access to I-85.

This growth is now leaping across the Catawba River into Gaston County, fueled by cheaper land prices. US 29 (called Franklin Boulevard in the City of Gastonia) is one of the few crossings of the Catawba from Mecklenburg County into Gaston County. As Figure 2.5 indicates, much of the residential growth in Gaston County is projected for areas north and south of the historic core of the city of Gastonia. In addition, the projected growth in Gaston County between 2000 and 2030 is primarily population growth, while areas of Mecklenburg County, across the Catawba River are expected to experience high employment growth. This creates a jobs/housing imbalance in both Gaston County and western Mecklenburg County.

This corridor master plan represents an opportunity to re-conceptualize Franklin Boulevard through the city as a dynamic resource for attracting some of this new growth back into the older parts of the city. By re-using and enhancing the existing infrastructure of the city for new growth, current rural areas of the county can be preserved.



Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study: Where Do You Live?

- Franklin Boulevard
- Major Roadway Network
- Gastonia City Limits

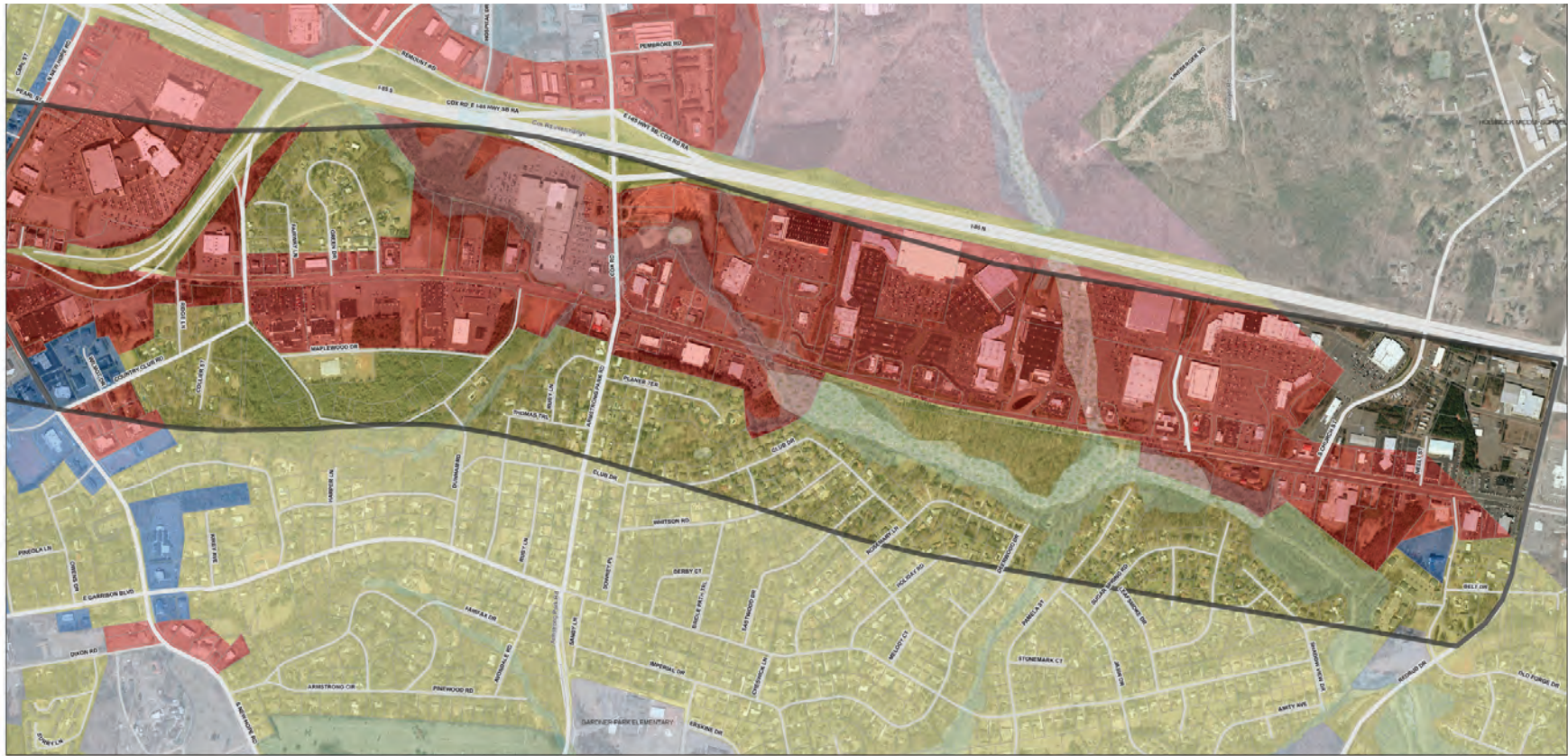


Land Use

Overview

The Franklin Boulevard corridor is central to the future health and vibrancy of the City of Gastonia and Gaston County. The corridor functions in several roles as it traverses the city. It is a commercial linkage between the new growth at either end of the city with the older established neighborhoods near downtown. It is an important civic spine, containing numerous prominent religious and government buildings. It historically also served as an industrial corridor in certain places, with institutions like Sun Drop and major places of employment, such as the current and former textile mills. Finally, the corridor serves as the front door to different residential neighborhoods that are set back off the corridor, including the York Chester Local Historic District, the Loray Mill Village, and the Downtown National Register Historic Districts.

Understanding the land use conditions along side of Franklin Boulevard is important for planning what it could be in the future. For the purposes of this section, the corridor has been divided into three segments to look at the existing land uses in detail.



Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study: Eastern Segment



Land Use

Eastern Segment

The eastern segment of Franklin Boulevard, from the municipal line with Lowell on the east to the intersection with New Hope Road on the west, is differentiated by two primary conditions.

Along the north side of the corridor is a series of large lot commercial properties, many developed within the last 15 years (Figure 2.1). Two of the exceptions to this are the older development of the Gaston Mall at Cox Road and the Westfield Mall at the New Hope Road intersection. These land uses provide the primary retail destinations in Gaston County and even attract significant numbers of patrons from nearby counties such as Cleveland and Lincoln (Figure 2.2). Excellent access to I-85 via Franklin Boulevard has enhanced the demand for car dealerships, home improvement supercenters and similar retail development catering to a regional market.

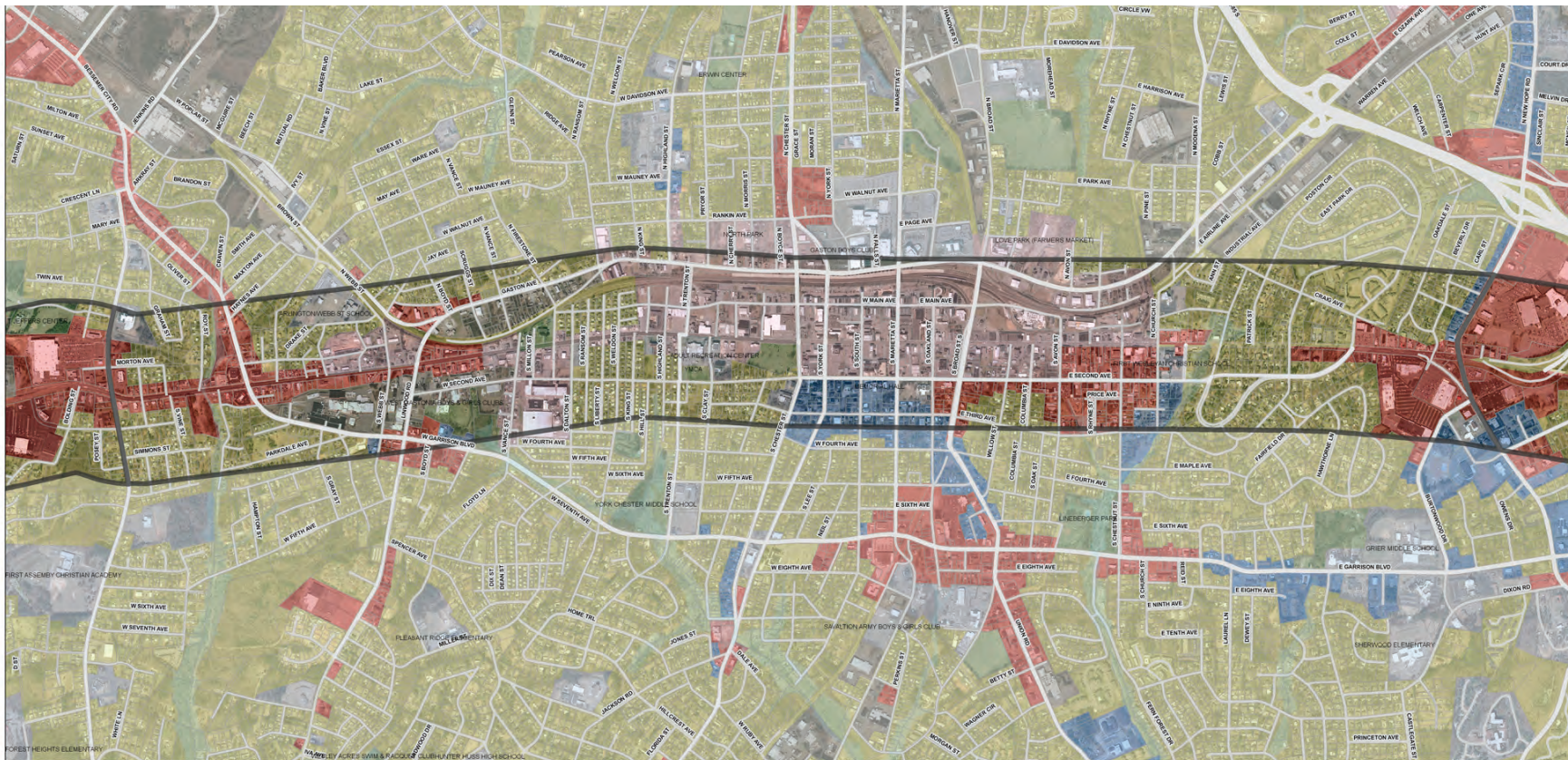
The south side of the corridor consists primarily of single family residential neighborhoods. Most of these neighborhoods are not directly accessible from Franklin Boulevard, rather their access is via perpendicular streets such as Cox Road. Included in this category are several significant parcels of undeveloped land along the south side of Franklin Boulevard. This undeveloped land corresponds to the 100 year flood plain and wetlands. Much of this segment of the corridor lies at a lower elevation relative to the rest of the study area.



Figure 2.1



Figure 2.2



Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study: Central Segment



Land Use

Central Segment

The central segment of the Franklin Boulevard corridor study runs from New Hope Road on the east through downtown to Myrtle School Road on the west. This segment includes the oldest parts of the community, including the downtown and former Mill Village around the Firestone Mill.

The intersection around New Hope Road is similar in nature to the commercial properties further east along the corridor. There is a hospital, an important employment and visitor destination, on the north side of I-85 east of New Hope Road. Franklin Boulevard travels downhill from New Hope Road through an older established residential neighborhood, with single family homes fronting onto the street, which is sheltered by a dense canopy (Figure 2.3). The tree canopied character of this downtown neighborhood near Belvedere creates a unique section of the corridor, as identified by community members. Anecdotally, the traffic tends to go slower through this area, due presumably to the scale of the trees and the residences fronting on the street.

Leaving the residential neighborhood, Franklin Boulevard ascends towards downtown through a former industrial corridor, with a current mix of commercial and civic establishments, along with legacy industrial sites like the Sun Drop bottling plant. Prominent views towards downtown are found

along this segment (Figure 2.4).

Through downtown, the corridor is designated as mixed-use, and as such the section of the roadway changes. Prominent churches and government buildings are interspersed with surface parking lots through the downtown. The segment west of downtown includes the York Chester cemetery, along with the former Sears building, the downtown YMCA, and the Gaston County Police station which front the corridor, as well as several older hotels. Issues identified by the community include prostitution and drug-related activity in the vicinity. People do not feel safe and the land use character is a contributing factor.

Leaving downtown, Franklin Boulevard runs through the old mill village around the Firestone Mill, characterized by small scale single family housing with mixed scale commercial establishments and vacant parking lots (Figure 2.5). Parkdale Mills, the only remaining active textile mill in the city is located just west of the Firestone Mill.

As the corridor approaches Myrtle School Road on the west, the older commercial areas give way to some newer commercial development. This new commercial development forms the gateway into the city from the west.



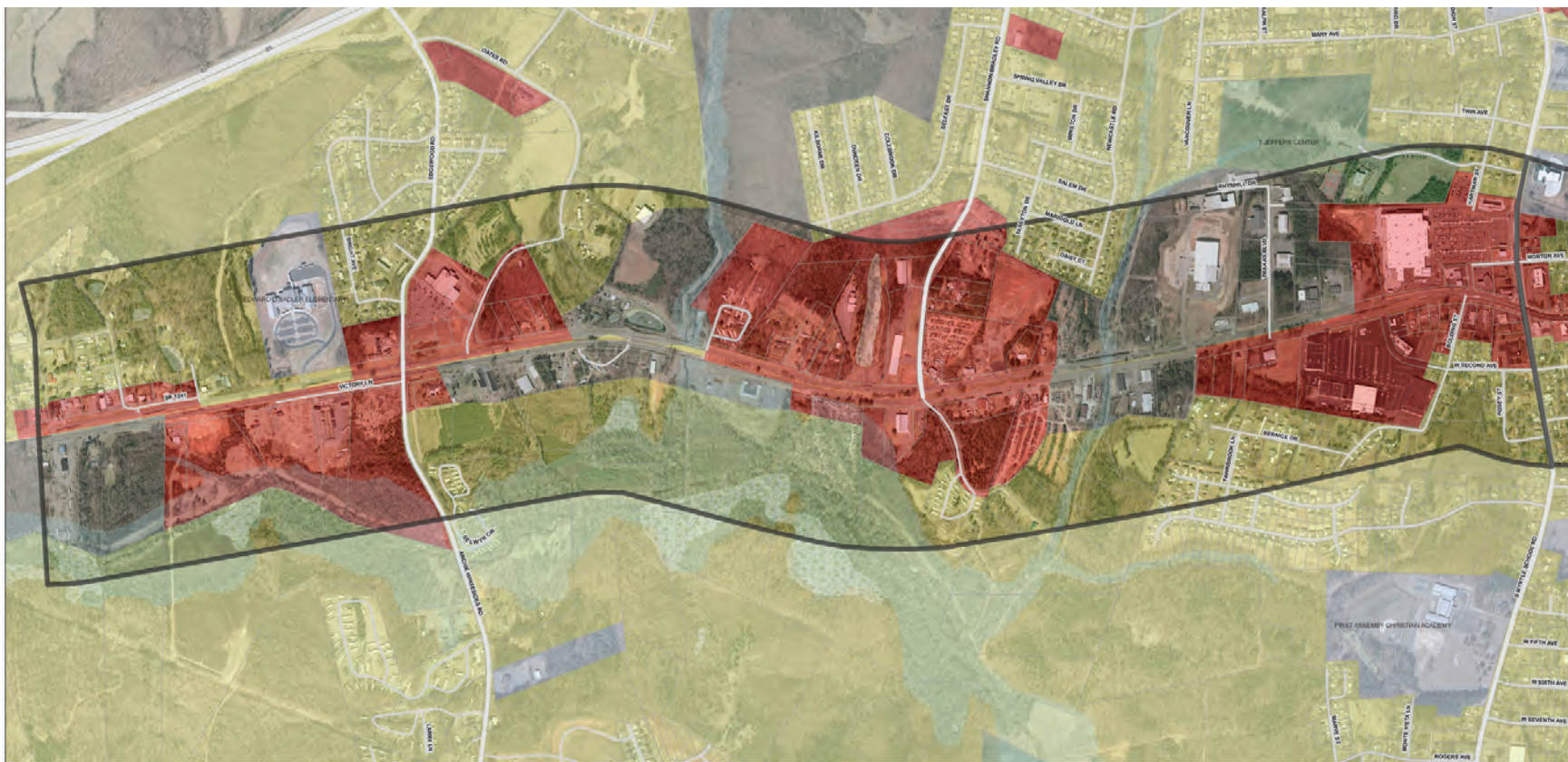
Figure 2.3



Figure 2.4




Figure 2.5



Franklin Boulevard Corridor Study: Western Segment

Commercial	Office	Residential	100 Year Floodplain
Industrial	Parks	Utility	Study Area Boundaries
Mixed Use	Public	Wetlands	Roadway Network



Land Use

Western Segment

The character of the western segment of Franklin Boulevard differs most from the other segments. It runs from the Myrtle School Road intersection to the municipal boundary on the west near Sadler Elementary School.

While the area around the Myrtle School Road intersection and the intersections with Shannon-Bradley Road and Edgewood Road are indicated as commercial, much of this segment of roadway still retains its rural character (Figure 2.9).

The roadway follows the rolling terrain and has a wide median with two lanes in each direction (Figure 2.10). Manufactured homes line parts of this segment and the low-lying floodplain that runs adjacent to the corridor in this segment contains several old car dumps that have been there for at least three decades. Despite attractive rolling hills and views of Crowders Mountain, the scenery is marred by these decrepit buildings and the rusting metal of car cemeteries.

Issues + Opportunities Maps

As part of the public outreach effort undertaken during the corridor study, community meetings were held along the corridor to solicit input regarding the study. Residents were asked to indicate on maps and flip charts areas where they saw issues along the corridor that needed addressing as well as places of opportunities.

For the purpose of this exercise, the corridor was divided into four segments, with the central segment broken out into Downtown and Greasy Corner/Mill Village. The comments and ideas received from the public were recorded and summarized on the following maps. These form the basis for the design ideas and master plan that follows.

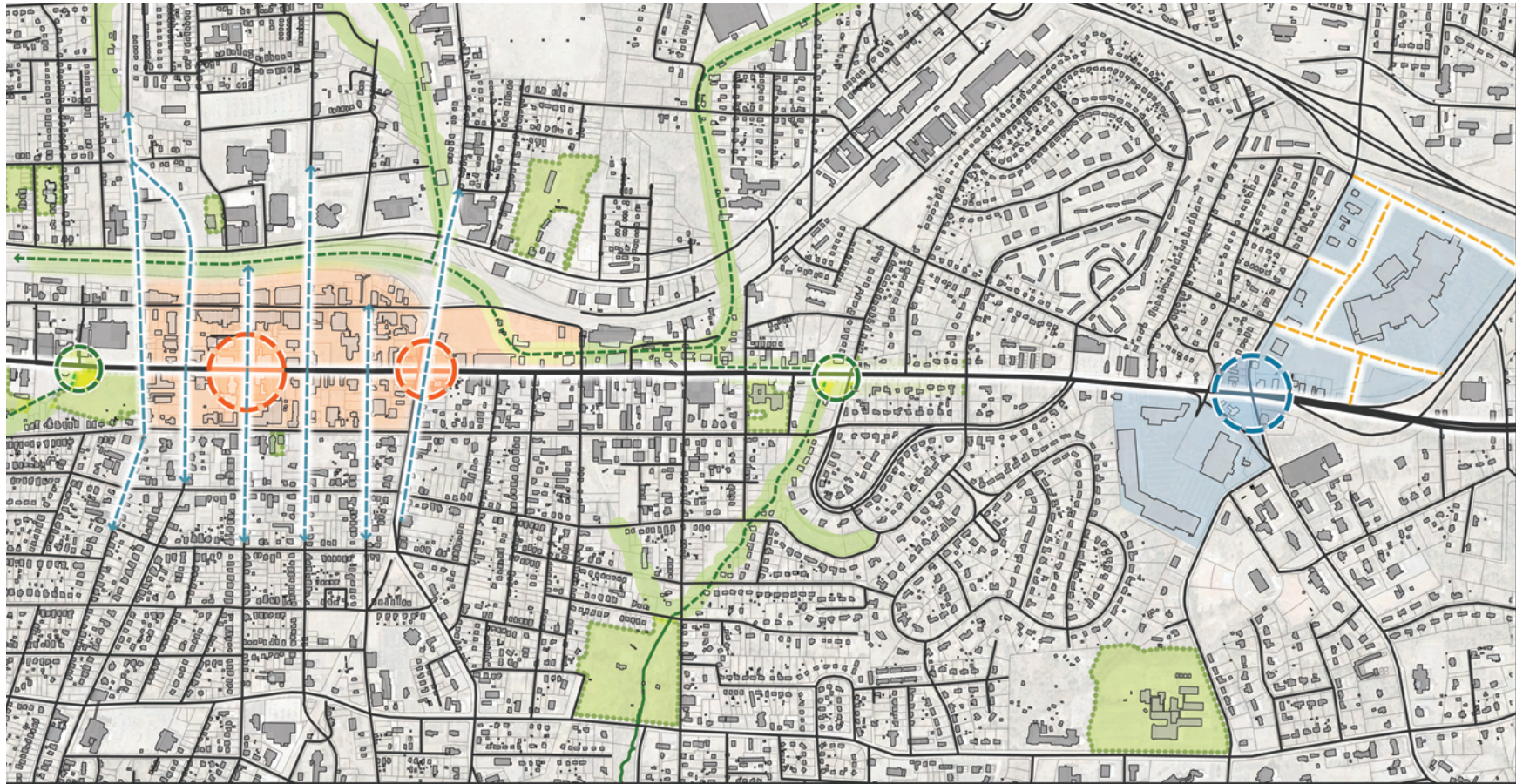


Figure 2.9



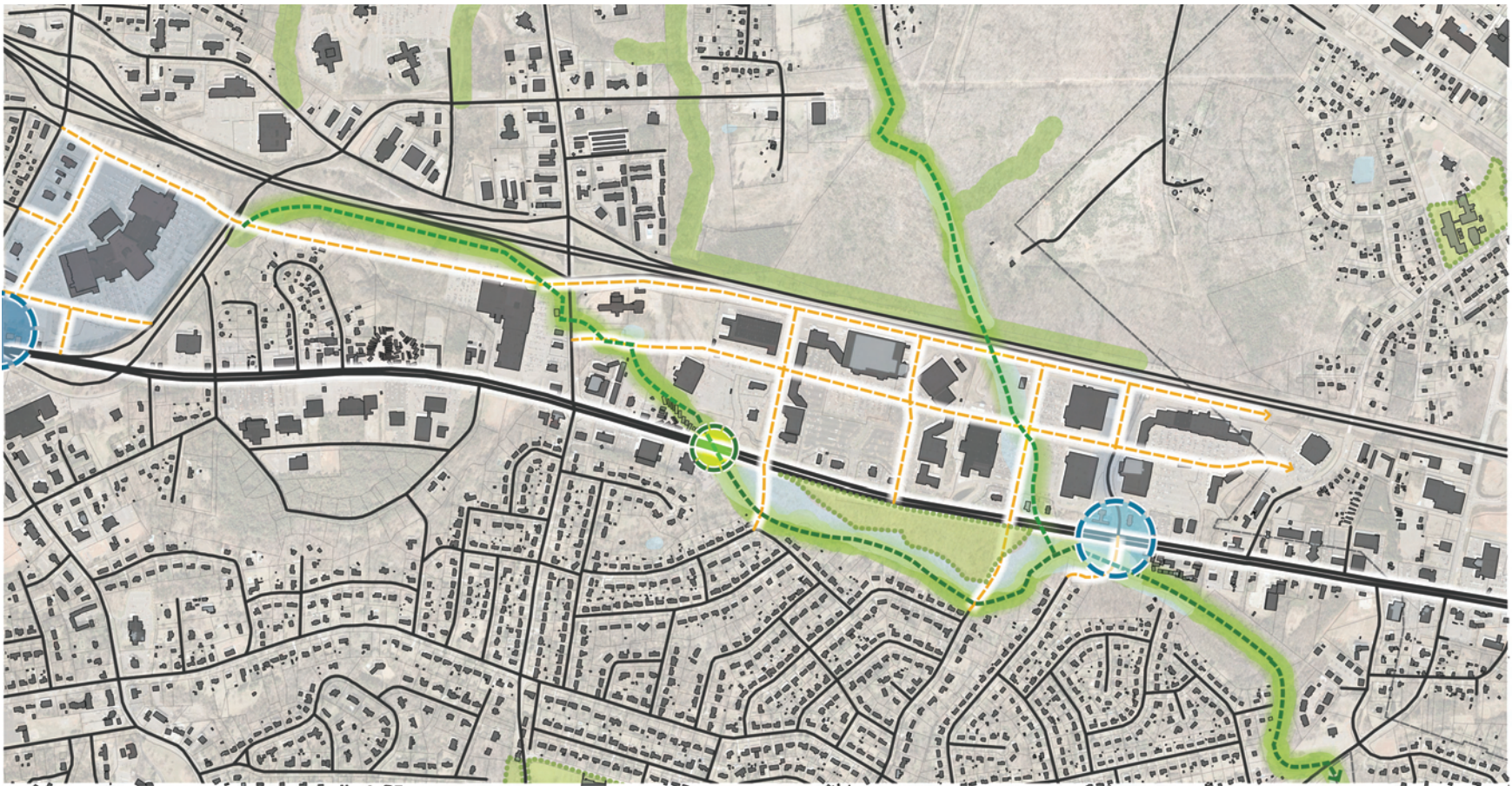
Figure 2.10

DOWNTOWN ISSUES + OPPORTUNITIES MAP

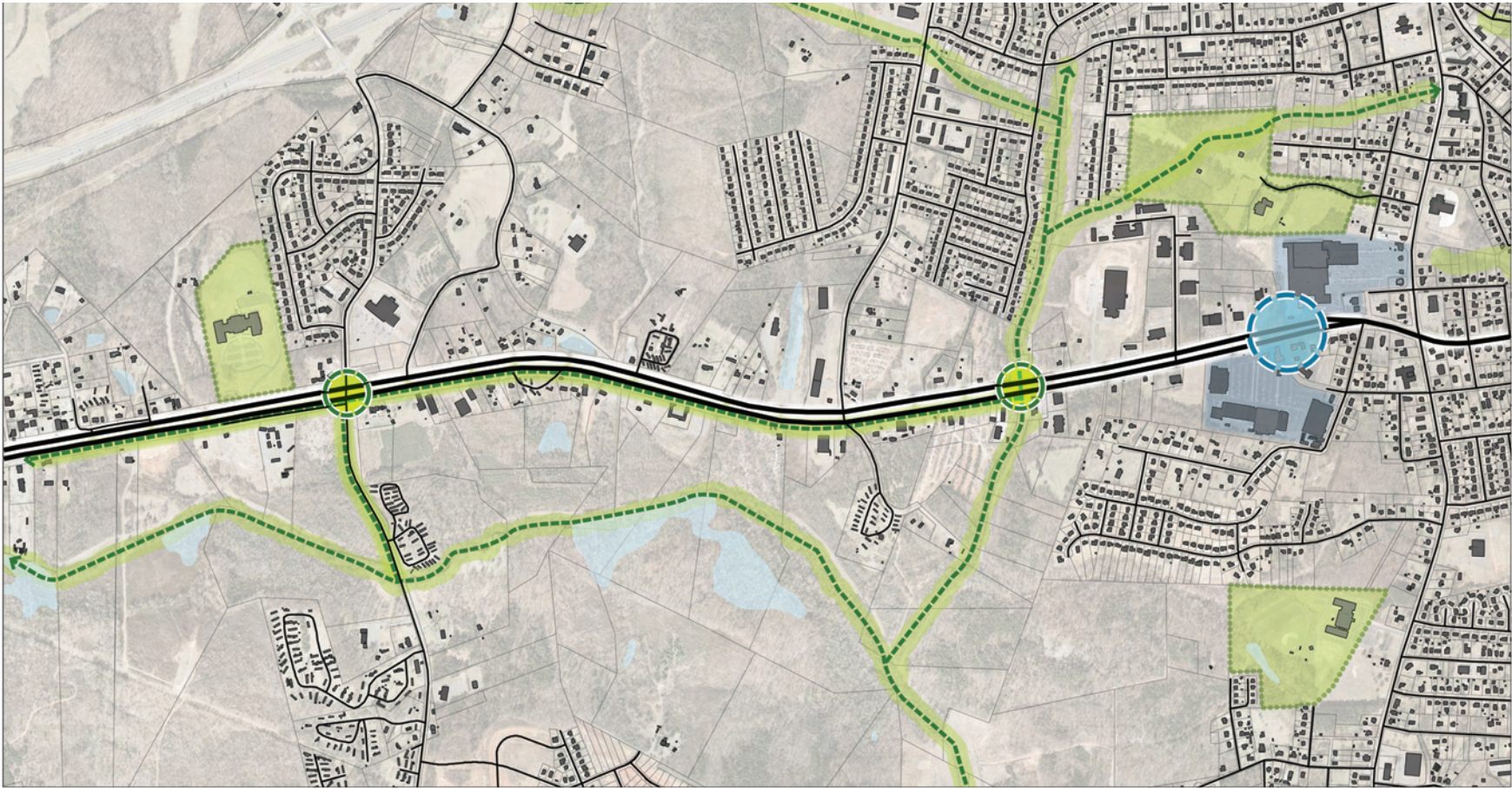


legend			
	historic/cultural mixed-use focal point		new mixed-use focal point
	historic/cultural fabric		existing suburban fabric
	greenway crossing		proposed greenways
	existing park/civic space		strengthen N/S pedestrian connections
			potential new roadways

EASTERN GATEWAY ISSUES + OPPORTUNITIES MAP

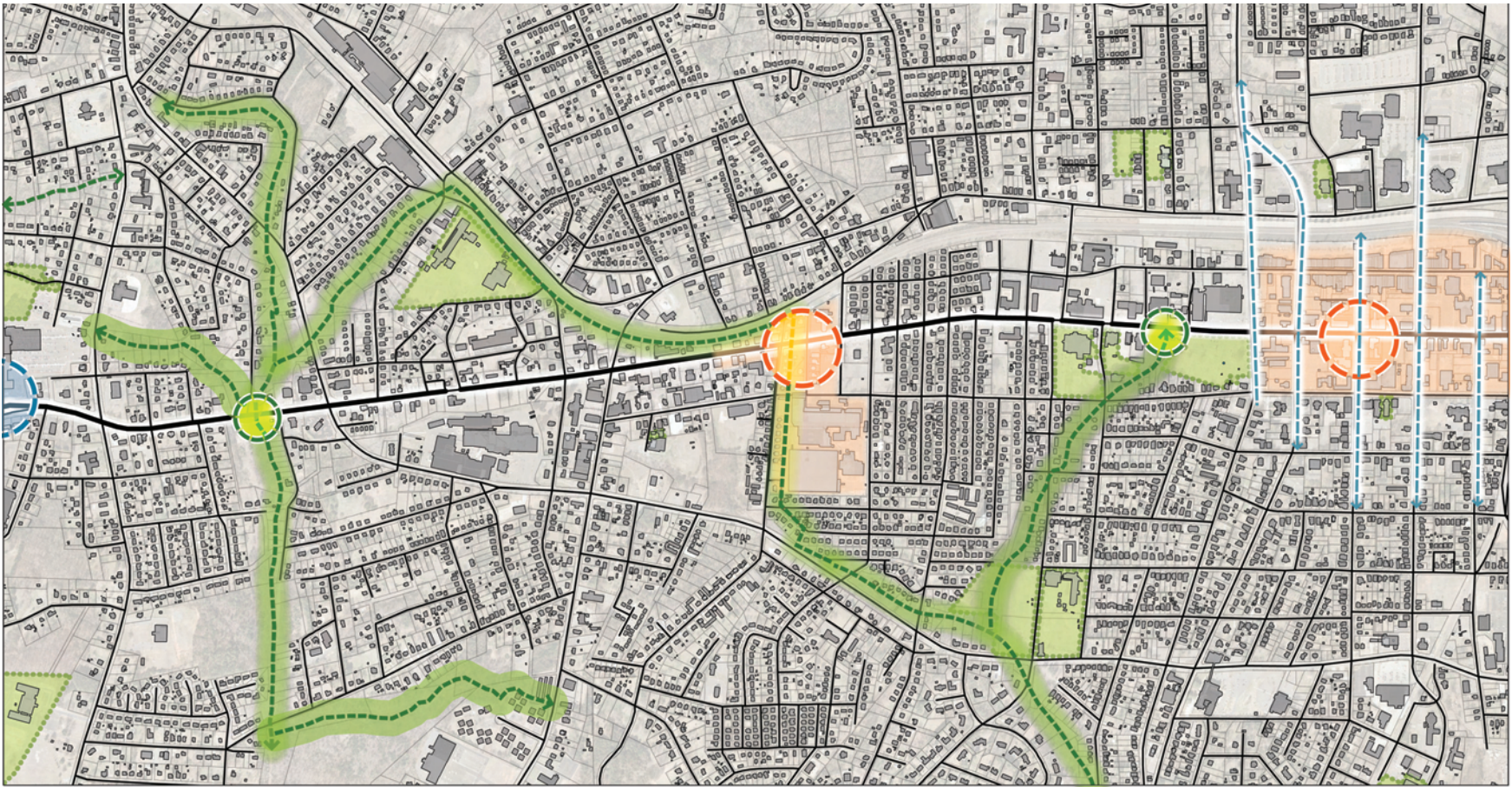


WESTERN GATEWAY ISSUES + OPPORTUNITIES MAP



legend			
	historic/cultural mixed-use focal point		new mixed-use focal point
	historic/cultural fabric		existing suburban fabric
	greenway crossing		existing park/civic space
			strengthen N/S pedestrian connections
			potential new roadways

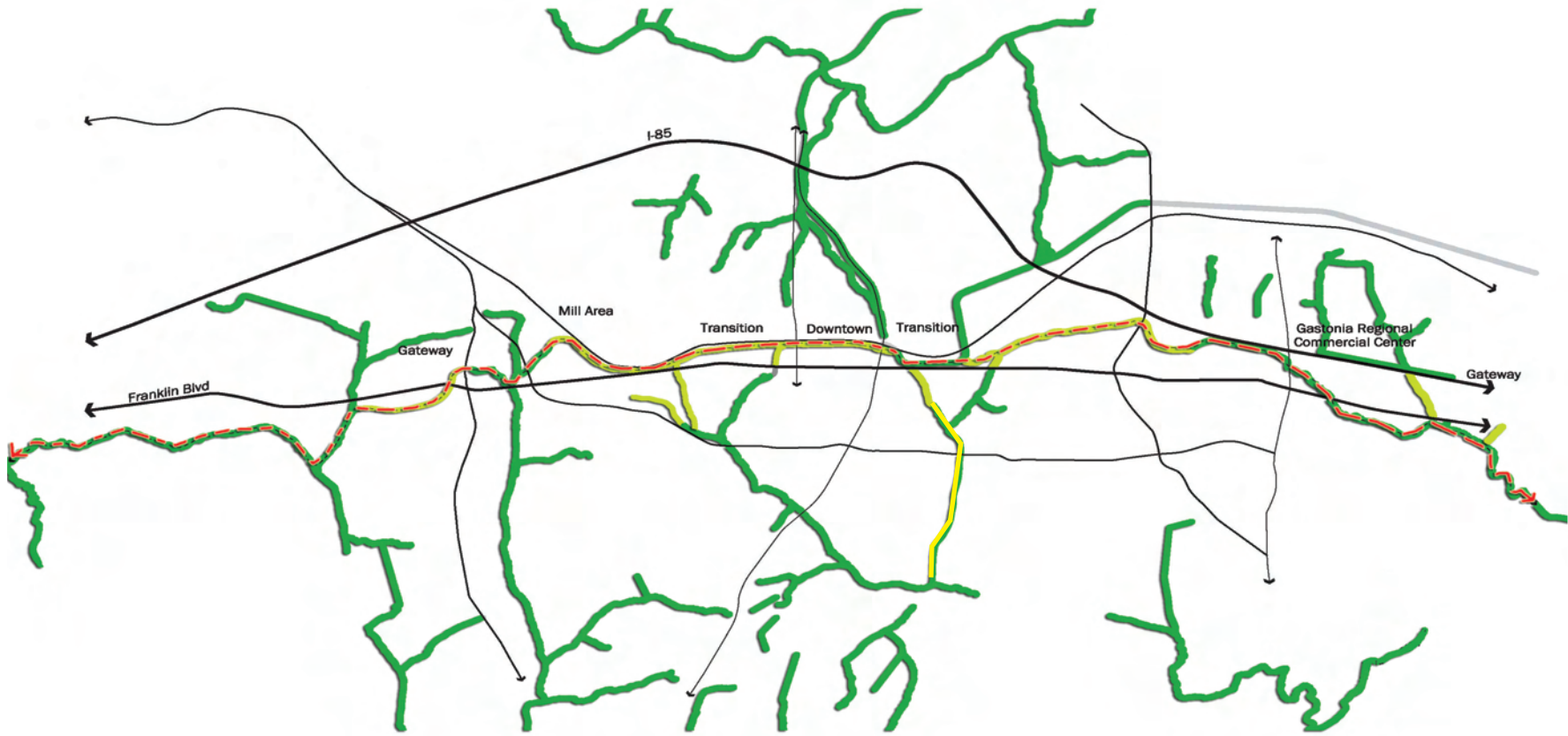
MILL VILLAGES ISSUES + OPPORTUNITIES MAP







REDEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS



- Existing Greenways
- Proposed Greenways
- Proposed Greenway Extensions
- Primary Greenway Trail

Overview

The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan builds on the unique and distinguishing assets all along Franklin Boulevard in Gastonia – unique views, a vibrant mix of historic buildings and adjacent neighborhoods, abundant places of worship, and iconic local establishments – to create a stronger linkage between physical conditions, community values and a vision for the future.

A challenge for the community is that those outstanding and unique assets are not clearly visible or inviting from the roadway. There are glimpses and teases of what could be one of the Charlotte regions’s most vibrant real urban corridors offering a mix of places to live, work and play, but they are juxtaposed with decaying buildings, industrial land uses, abandoned lots and acres of empty asphalt (parking lots). It’s the job of this master plan to link these places together and create a unifying theme that reinforces the sense of history and promise for the future of the corridor as an attractive, attainable and rewarding place for people and businesses.

Given the length of the Franklin Boulevard corridor, the best way to draw these linkages is by creating walkable districts and opportunities to draw people from the community to specific places along the corridor. To accomplish the overall vision and goals, other means of mobility must be considered and planned. The City and MPO have a good framework in place for mobility that considers a mix

of greenways and transit options in the future. In order to realistically meet the demands required for the expenditure that both modes need, the Franklin Boulevard corridor must redevelop in a manner that can support these initiatives.

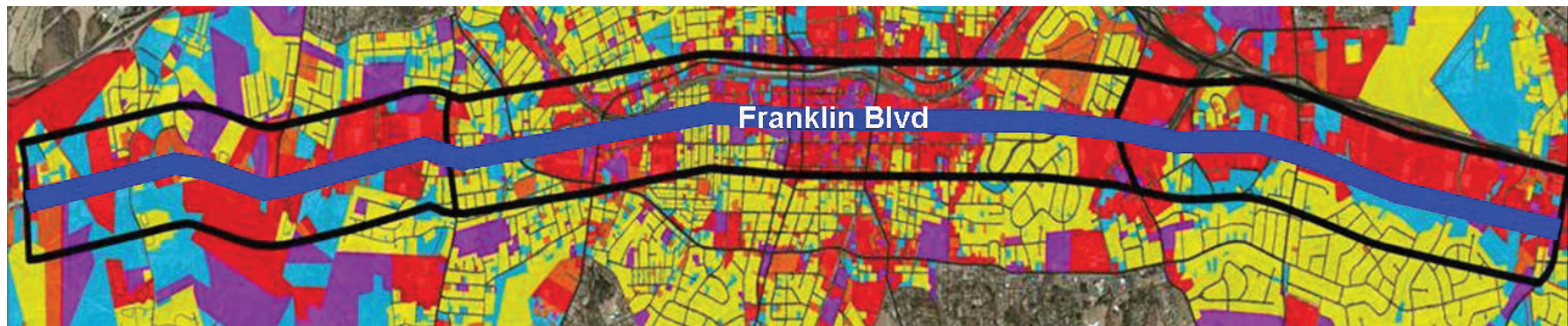
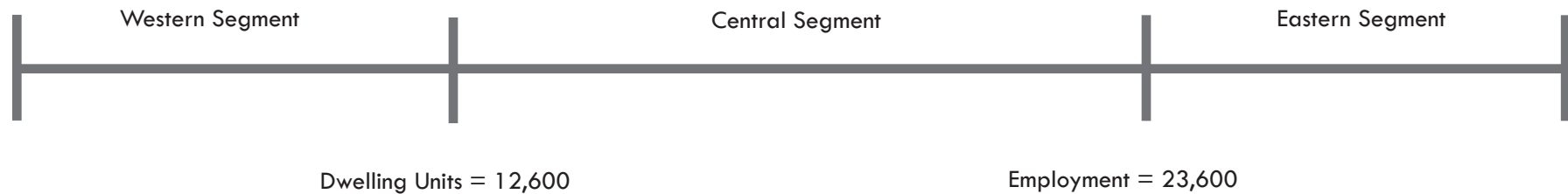
This Master Plan envisions building upon the existing Greenways Plan by connecting the various links into a parallel corridor to Franklin Boulevard. This cohesive link will provide an alternative mode of mobility along the corridor and connect the adjacent neighborhoods to the street where it intersects with the greenways.

In addition, plans call for an eventual dedicated transit service connecting Gastonia to the airport and downtown Charlotte. Different modes of transit require different densities for ideal operating capacities (see page 55). This Master Plan begins to lay out a land use and design framework for redeveloping key points along Franklin Boulevard into future transit oriented developments.

In order to arrive at a preferred scenario, a build out analysis looking at land use was developed to compare the existing conditions with two future scenarios - a trend and an alternative.

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

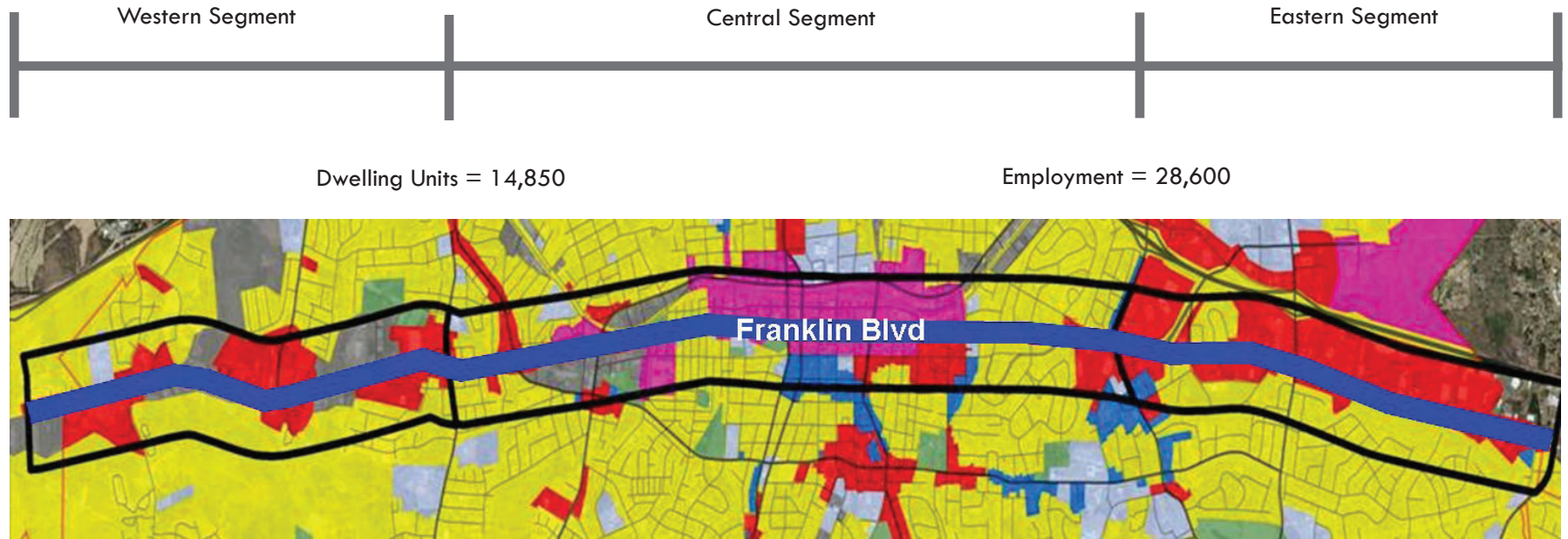
Existing Land Use (2000)



The Build-out Analysis involves determining the potential amount and distribution of population and employment growth over a certain time frame. Utilizing data from the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation model, and an inventory of the existing land uses within 1/4 mile of the corridor, the build-out analysis was conducted to determine how much additional development can occur along the corridor given current zoning and development regulations. This inventory included quantifying the existing built-out land uses as well as all of the vacant land along the corridor. Socio-economic data from the year 2000 was then allocated to the existing land to produce the above map. This provides a baseline for comparing future growth scenarios.

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

Future Land Use (2030)



A Build-out Analysis then was applied to a future horizon year of 2030 - utilizing the socio-economic projects from the transportation model for that year. The current future land use and zoning designations were assigned to the vacant land along the corridor to establish a projected build-out of population and employment in the corridor, assuming no change to existing regulations. In addition, the alternative development scenarios provided varying densities and intensities of new development estimating other build-out options. The results indicate a future potential increase of 2,850 new dwelling units and 5,000 new jobs by the year 2030 based on the current trend. Using the build-out population and employment numbers from the trend scenario as control totals, the alternative redevelopment scenario distributed the new growth in a different form.

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

	Existing		Build-out (Trend)		Alternative Scenario	
	Dwelling Units	Employment	Dwelling Units	Employment	Dwelling Units	Employment
City of Gastonia	27,400	35,700	34,900	44,000	35,550	50,000
Franklin Boulevard (Study Area)	12,600	23,600	14,850	28,600	16,600	35,700
% of City	46%	66%	42%	64%	47%	71%
Jobs/Housing Balance	1.83 jobs per household		1.92 jobs per household		2.15 jobs per household	

BUILD-OUT ANALYSIS

The build-out analysis illustrates several important lessons for Gastonia. Current trends indicate that future growth along the corridor will increase the number of new dwelling units and jobs by 18 percent and 21 percent respectively over 30 years. However, the share of new dwelling units and employment would decrease in the corridor in relation to the rest of the city. Given the ease of developing greenfields over brown- or greyfields, this is not a surprising trend.

On the other hand, the alternative scenario envisioned in this corridor master plan would set up a regulatory framework for directing significant amounts of the projected growth into the existing infrastructure of the corridor. Under the alternative scenario, both dwelling unit and employment would increase in greater number in real terms versus the trend. In addition, the percentage of the city's total amount of dwelling units and jobs would increase substantially along the corridor. This is an important point, because for premium transit to work, it needs the corresponding densities, particularly on the residential side.

As indicated by the number of jobs per household, the increased density along the corridor, especially if it occurs at key points, will create a transit-ready community in Gastonia along Franklin Boulevard. More residential development reaching 30-40 units per acre, at a minimum, within a 1/2 mile distance of a future transit station is needed to ensure a successful transit investment.

COMMUTER RAIL

Gastonia



Central location accessible to commuter population

Charlotte



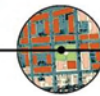
15 miles

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT (LRT)

Gastonia



1/2 mile radius



1.5 - 2 miles

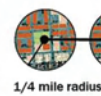


Charlotte



BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

Gastonia



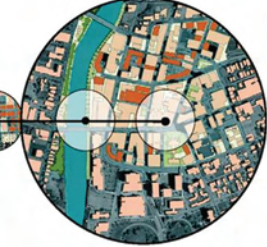
1/4 mile radius



0.5 - 1 miles

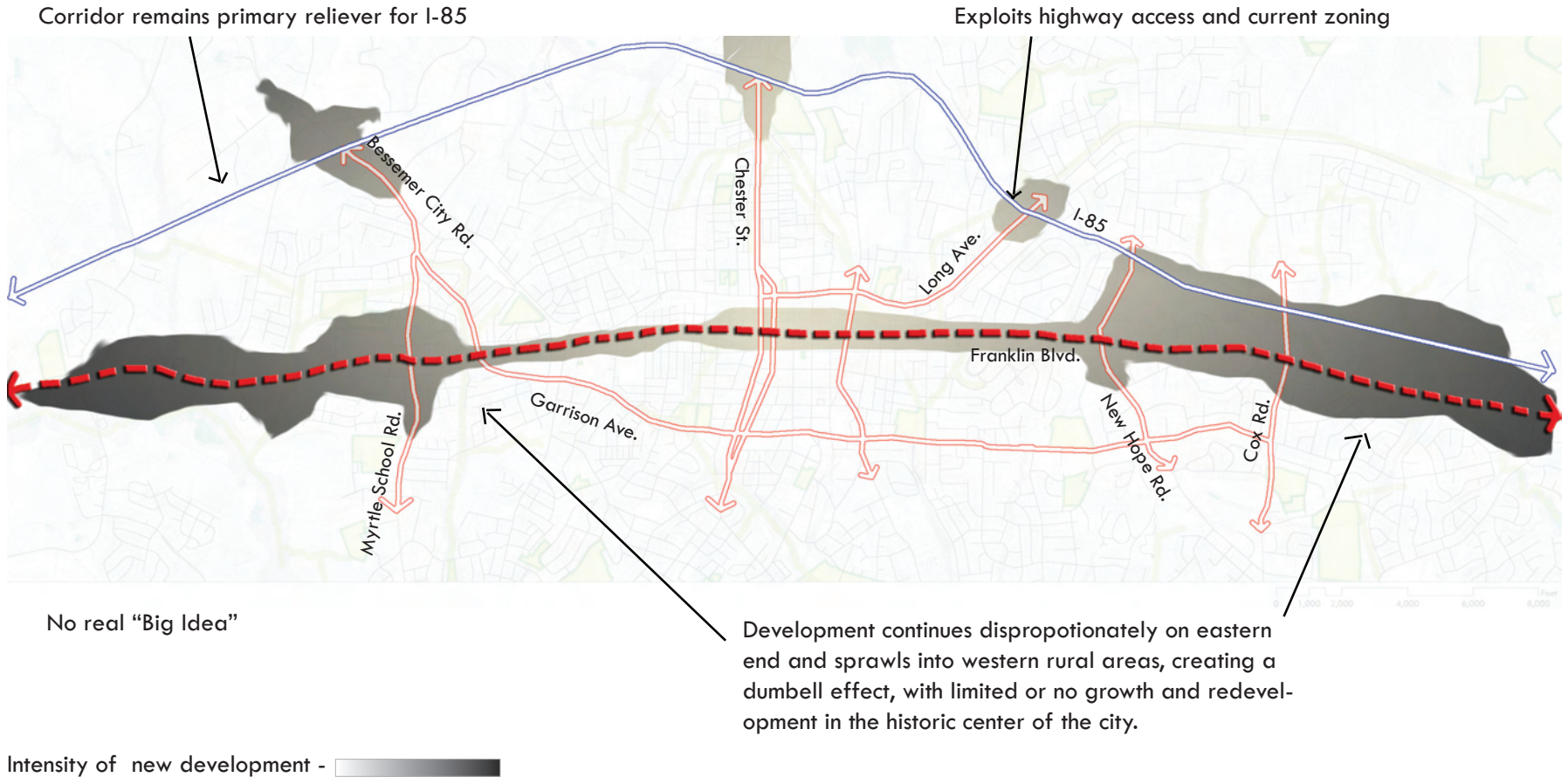


Charlotte



TREND GROWTH SCENARIO

Business as Usual

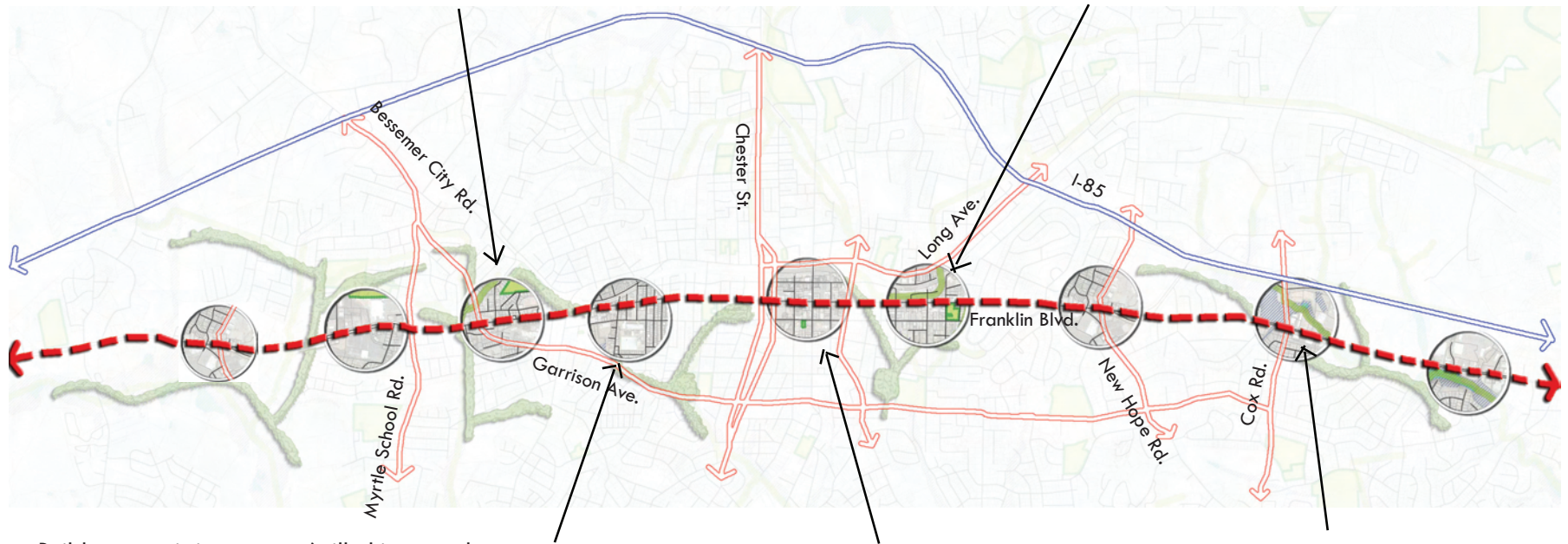


ALTERNATIVE GROWTH SCENARIO

Urban Green Boulevard

Corridor becomes route for future multi-modal transportation (i.e. premium transit)

Urban Centers framed by Green Network



Build upon existing assets (mills, history, urban fabric, greenways plan) unique to Gastonia to shape redevelopment.

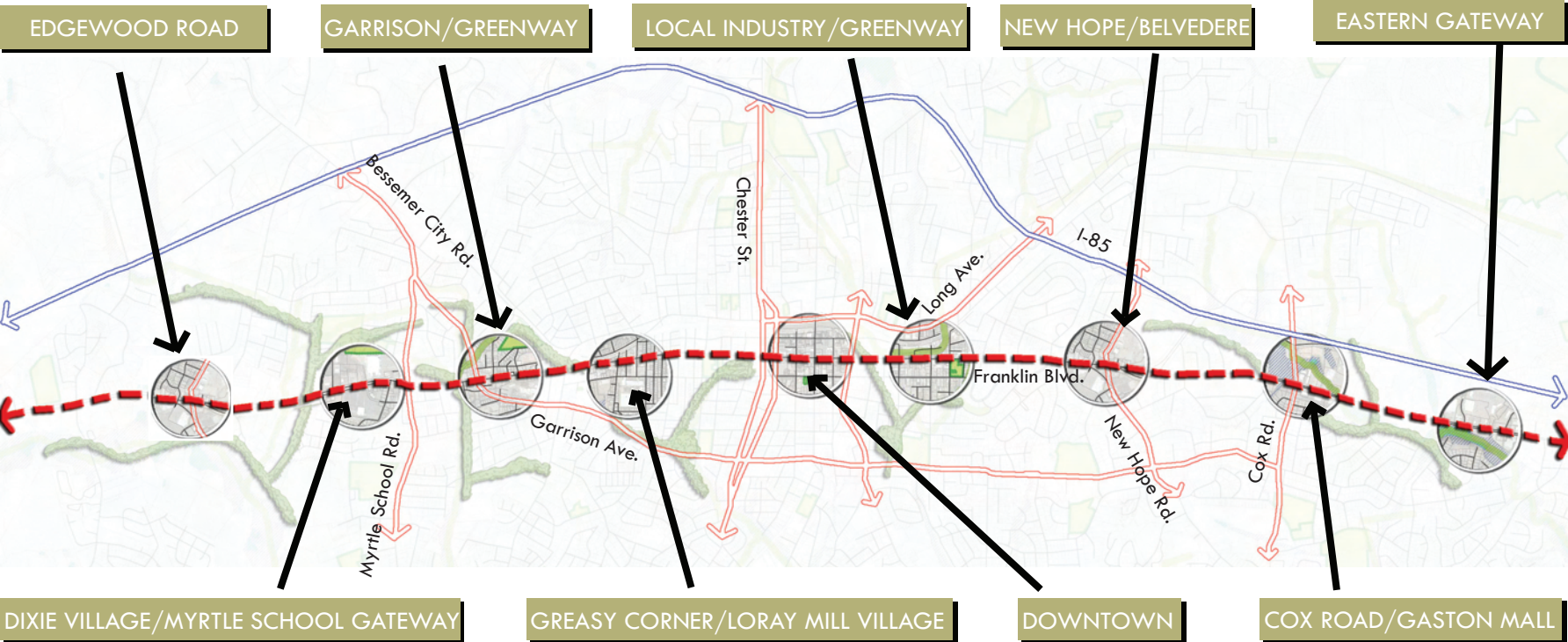
Growth directed to key intersections/segments, as defined by greenways, as well as along parallel corridors to Franklin Boulevard (i.e. Main Avenue).





IV

MASTER PLAN



Pulses of Redevelopment -

Master Plan Vision

This vision for the Franklin Boulevard corridor is to create places of distinction at key points along the corridor that enhance its character, strengthen the City's economic vitality and expand opportunities to attract residents, visitors and workers by increasing accessibility. These community focal points build upon existing issues and opportunities to create mixed use places that encourage walking, cycling, and use of transit; it can also serve as a source of civic pride and economic vitality within the community.

The Franklin Boulevard Corridor Master Plan is focused on the following community design goals:

1. Enhance connectivity while preserving capacity.
2. Capitalize on existing character and unique assets for redevelopment.
3. Create pedestrian oriented destinations and districts.
4. Increase multi-modal opportunities.

This is a long-range 30 year vision for redevelopment of Franklin Boulevard. Franklin Boulevard did not deteriorate overnight. For a variety of economic and social reasons, it took over 40 years for the corridor to decline. With that knowledge comes the reality that positive change, which reflects the community's vision, will also not happen overnight. However, there are many relatively low cost, near-term improvements that the City and its partners

can undertake that will serve as catalysts to the revitalization of this important gateway that links the City's past, present and future.

The Corridor Plan defines specific "pulses" or nodes of development that can serve as gateways, activity centers, and hubs for existing and planned transit services. To ensure that the remake of the Franklin Boulevard corridor is manageable, the City should target its capital improvement program toward addressing the recommendations of one key node at a time. This would have the advantage of demonstrating measurable progress toward the corridor's transformation in keeping with the master plan vision. In parallel, the City can define the specific overlay district boundaries, criteria and other regulatory strategies for other areas along Franklin Boulevard.

The following pages present the Master Plan summary for the four primary pulses, or focal points, of redevelopment along the corridor, highlighting the differing character of existing and proposed key points. These include a suburban commercial center (Eastern Gateway), the historic Downtown, the close-nit community surrounding the mill villages (Greasy Corner/Loray Mill Village) and the rural to suburban transition along the western approach into Gastonia (Dixie Village/Myrtle School Gateway).

With market forces guiding new development on the eastern segment of the corridor and existing economic and civic destinations driving the revitalization of downtown, public efforts to improve the corridor should begin on the western segment. With relatively little private investment and continuing concerns about crime, blight and urban decline, the western portion of the corridor from Shannon-Bradley Road to Myrtle School Road needs immediate attention. The catalyst for its transformation could be the redevelopment of the Firestone Mill/Loray Village site. The City can therefore capitalize on historic preservation funding assistance, private market interest, proximity to downtown and excellent regional accessibility to use this location as a catalyst for corridor-wide change.

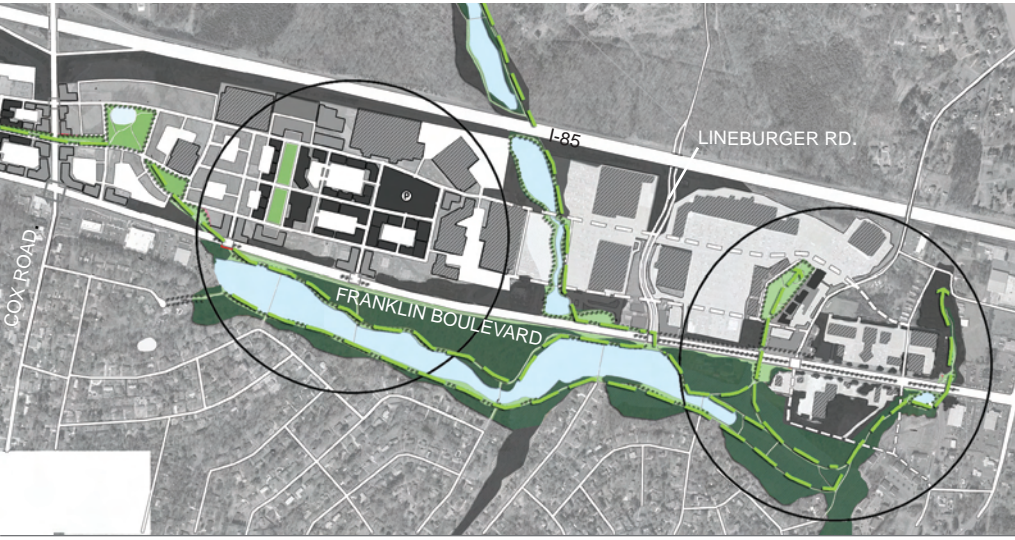


Downtown enhancement

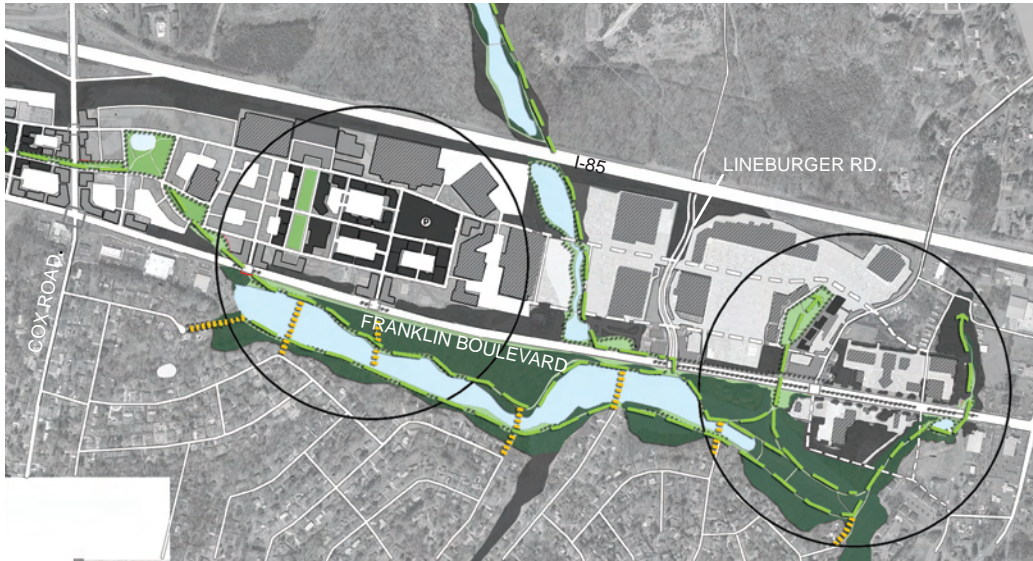
EASTERN GATEWAY



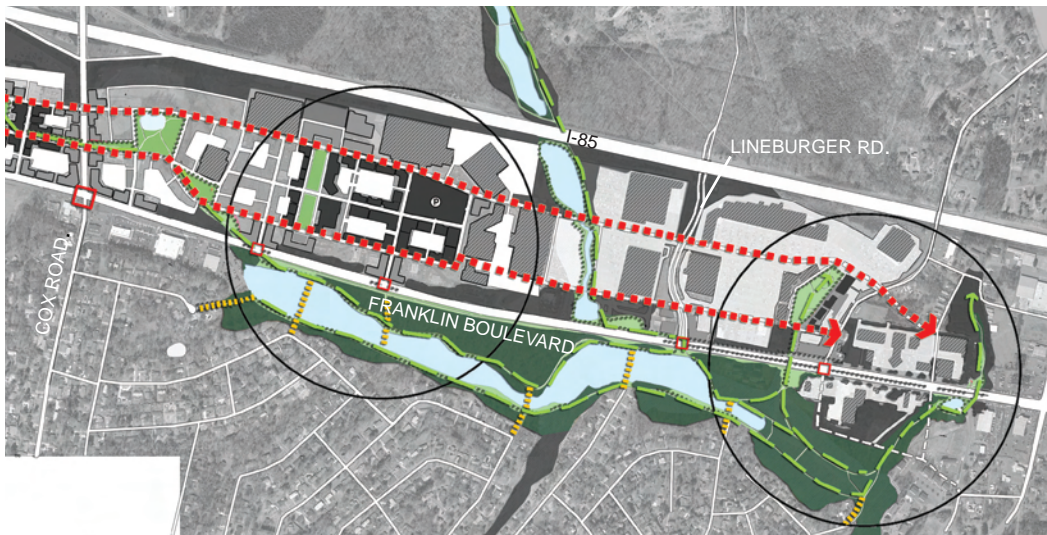
- Existing Conditions
- Commercial
 - Wetland/Stormwater



- - - New Multi-use greenway trails along riparian corridor.
- New park or open space south of Franklin Boulevard along the stream/wetland. Develop new civic spaces within re-developed commercial properties such as at Franklin Commons and the Gaston Mall.



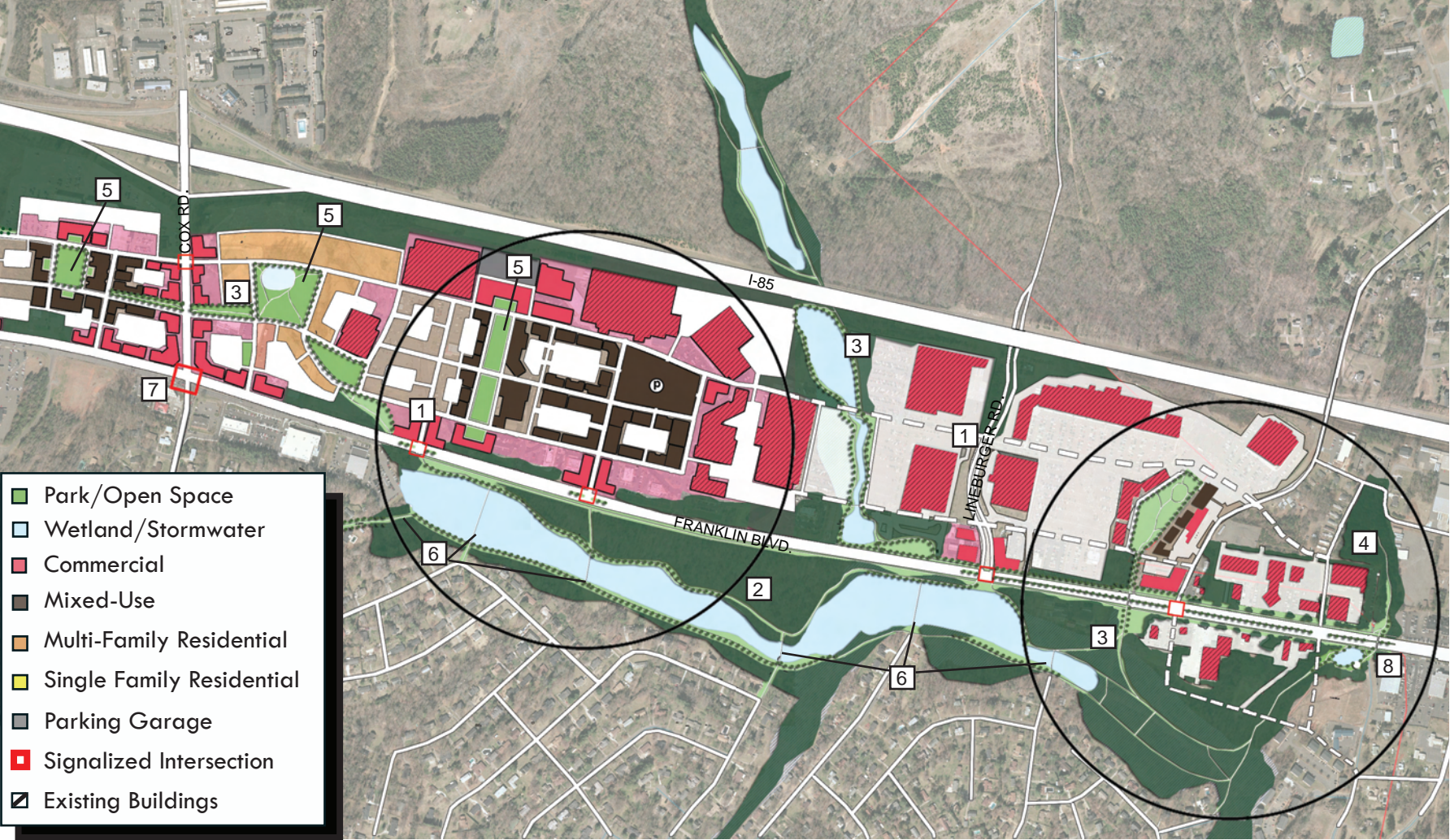
||||| Pedestrian connections from residential neighborhoods south of Franklin Boulevard across the new park to connect with the greenway trail and roadway intersections.



- Intersection Improvements on Cox Road, Franklin Commons, Lineberger Road, and Church Street.
- New parallel street network to improve inter-parcel access and traffic flow, and to reduce congestion at key intersections and segments along eastern Franklin Boulevard.

EASTERN GATEWAY









Mixed Use Infill Redevelopment with Transportation + Greenway Networks



Circles equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk



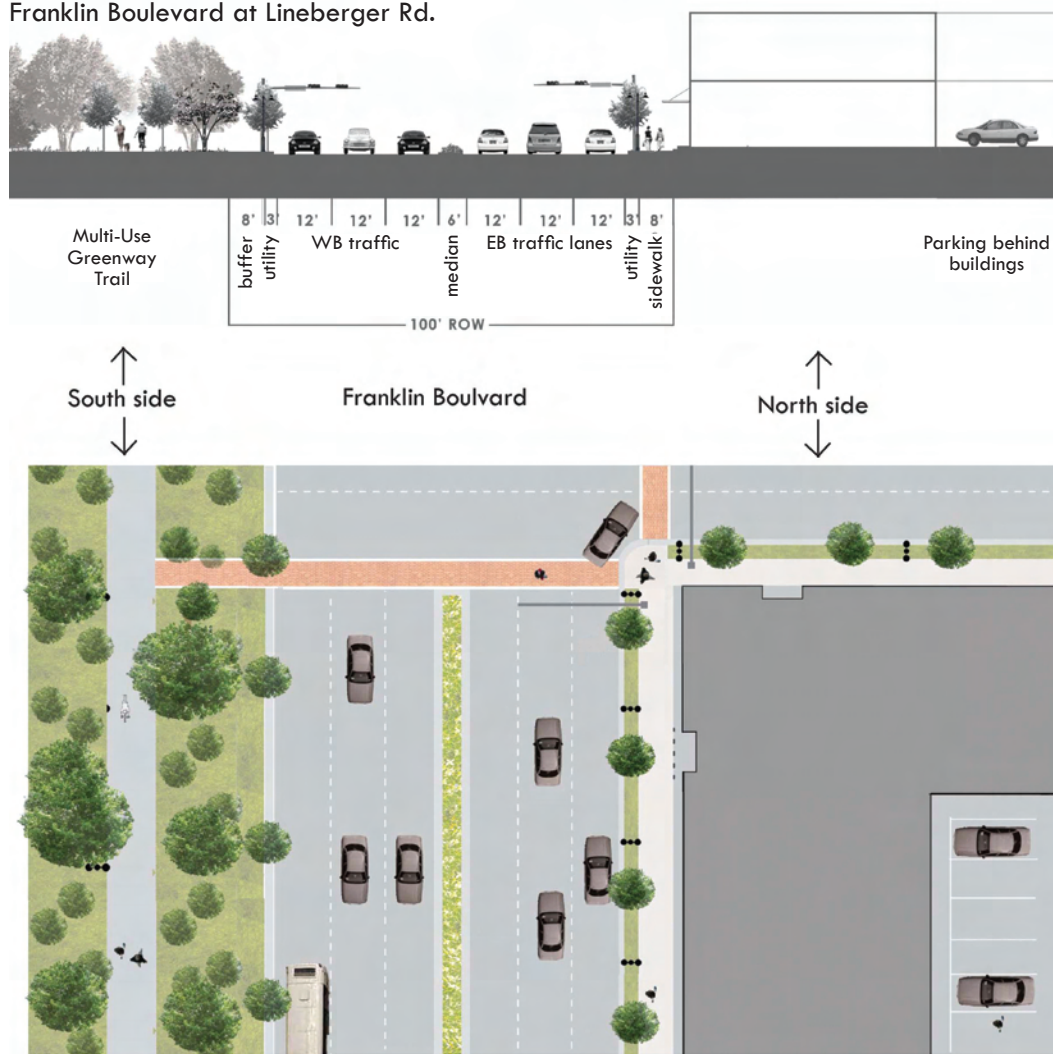
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Create a parallel street network north of Franklin Boulevard to connect various parcels and ease traffic on Franklin.		Phase II (6-10 years)	transportation plan
2	Create a park or open space on the parcel south of Franklin Boulevard between the street and the stream/wetland.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan
3	Develop multi-use greenway trails along riparian corridors. One example is the branch running north from Franklin Boulevard underneath I-85. This branch would provide connections between undeveloped property north of I-85 to Franklin Commons and Lineberger Road.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
4	Develop a multi-use trail spur from the riparian corridor to the Franklin Blvd. gateway intersection at the town boundary with Lowell.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
5	Create civic open space within re-developed commercial properties such as Franklin Commons and the Gaston Mall.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
6	Provide pedestrian connections from residential neighborhoods south of Franklin Blvd., across new park, to intersections with existing intersections into Franklin Commons.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
7	Improve intersections along Franklin Boulevard at: Cox Rd., Franklin Commons, Lineberger Rd., and Church St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	intersection imp.
8	Create gateway into Gastonia from Lowell with pedestrian bridge and signage spanning Franklin Boulevard at the municipal limit.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan

 Public  Private  Partnership

ENHANCED ROADWAY SECTION

Franklin Boulevard at Lineberger Rd.



The current entrance into the City of Gastonia from the east is indistinguishable from the surrounding municipalities. The Master Plan envisions creating sense of arrival through an enhanced planted median and street trees, with the potential for a pedestrian bridge crossing Franklin Boulevard at the municipal line, containing “Welcome to Gastonia” type signage.



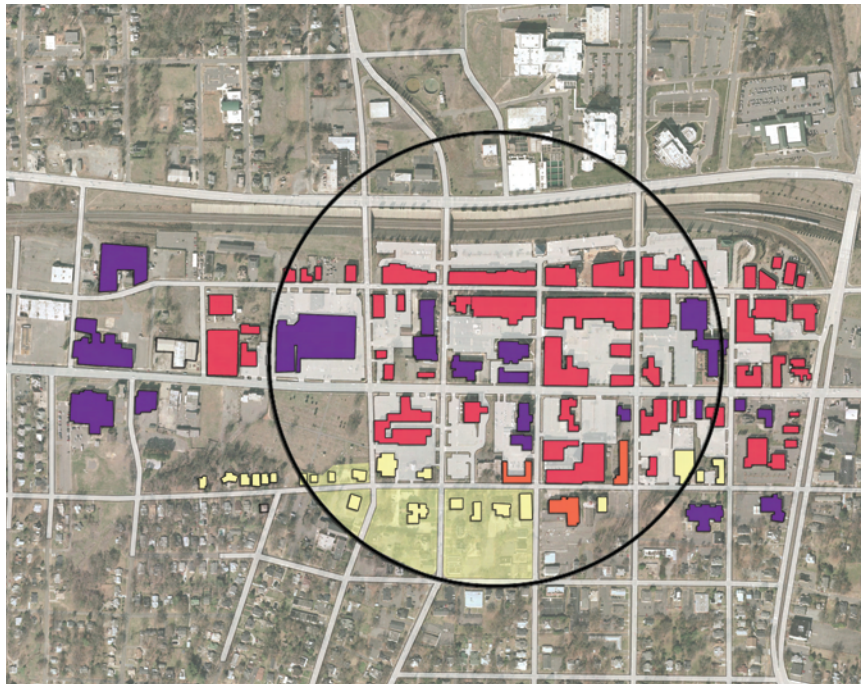
Existing Conditions



Street trees + planted median

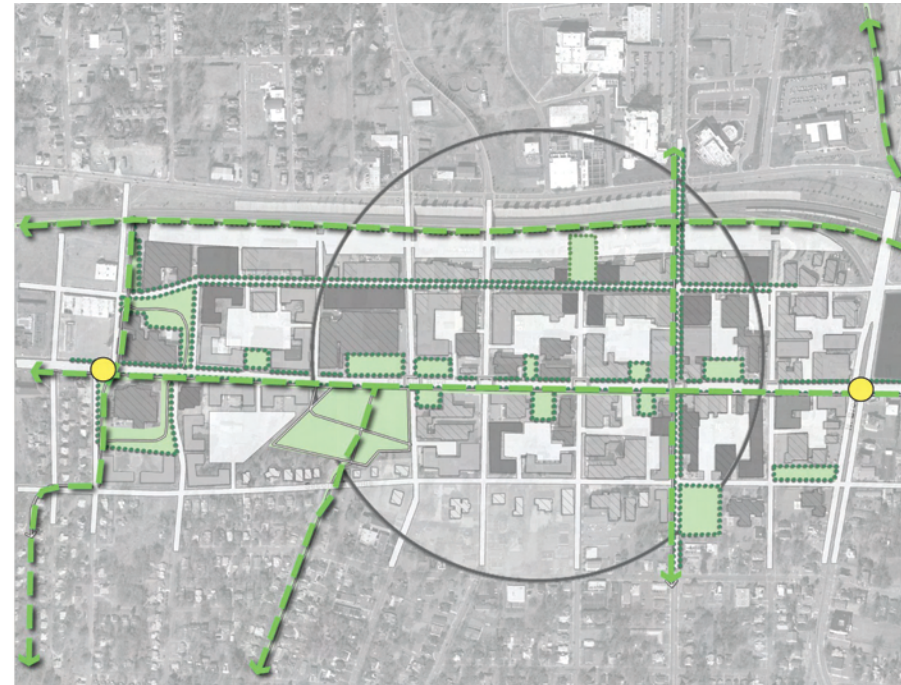
ENHANCED EASTERN GATEWAY STREETScape



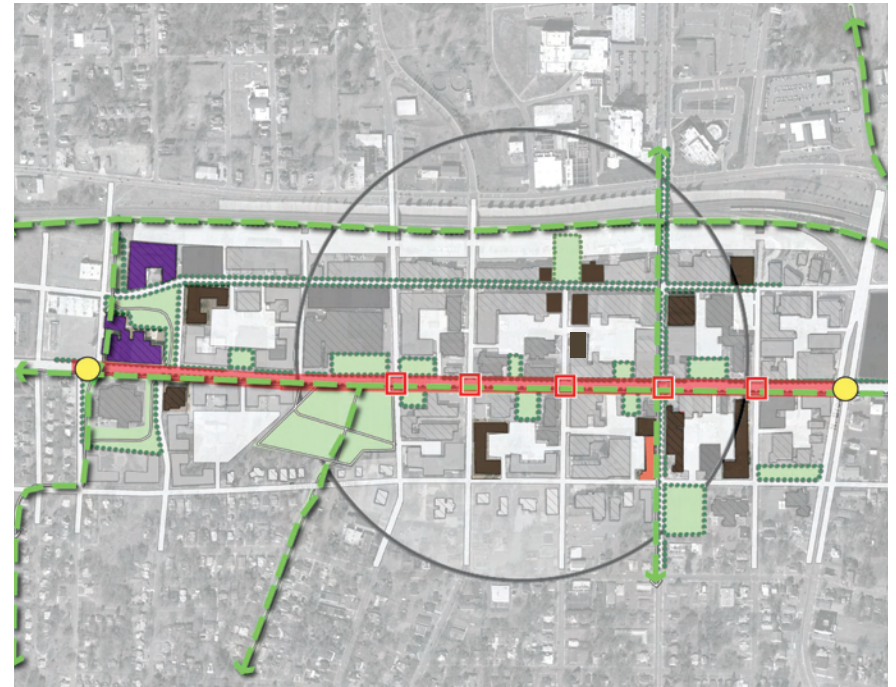
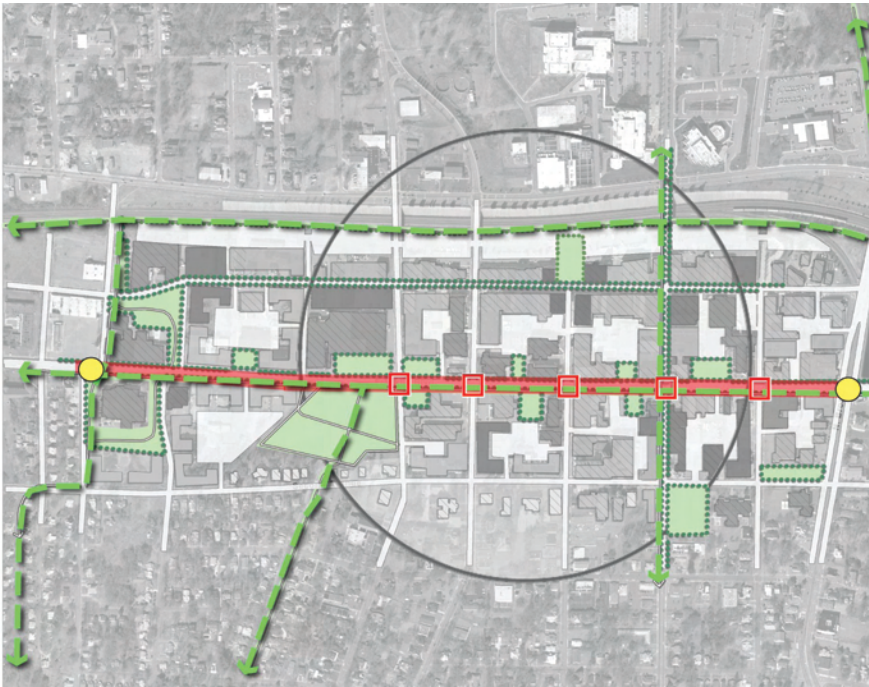




Existing Conditions



- Institutional
- Commercial
- Multi-Family Residential
- Single Family Residential



- — New Multi-use trails connect north and south sides of Franklin Blvd. and run through Main Avenue
- New civic open spaces located along Franklin Boulevard and along the railroad on South Street
- Gateway signage marking the entry into downtown area from the East and from the West on Franklin Boulevard.

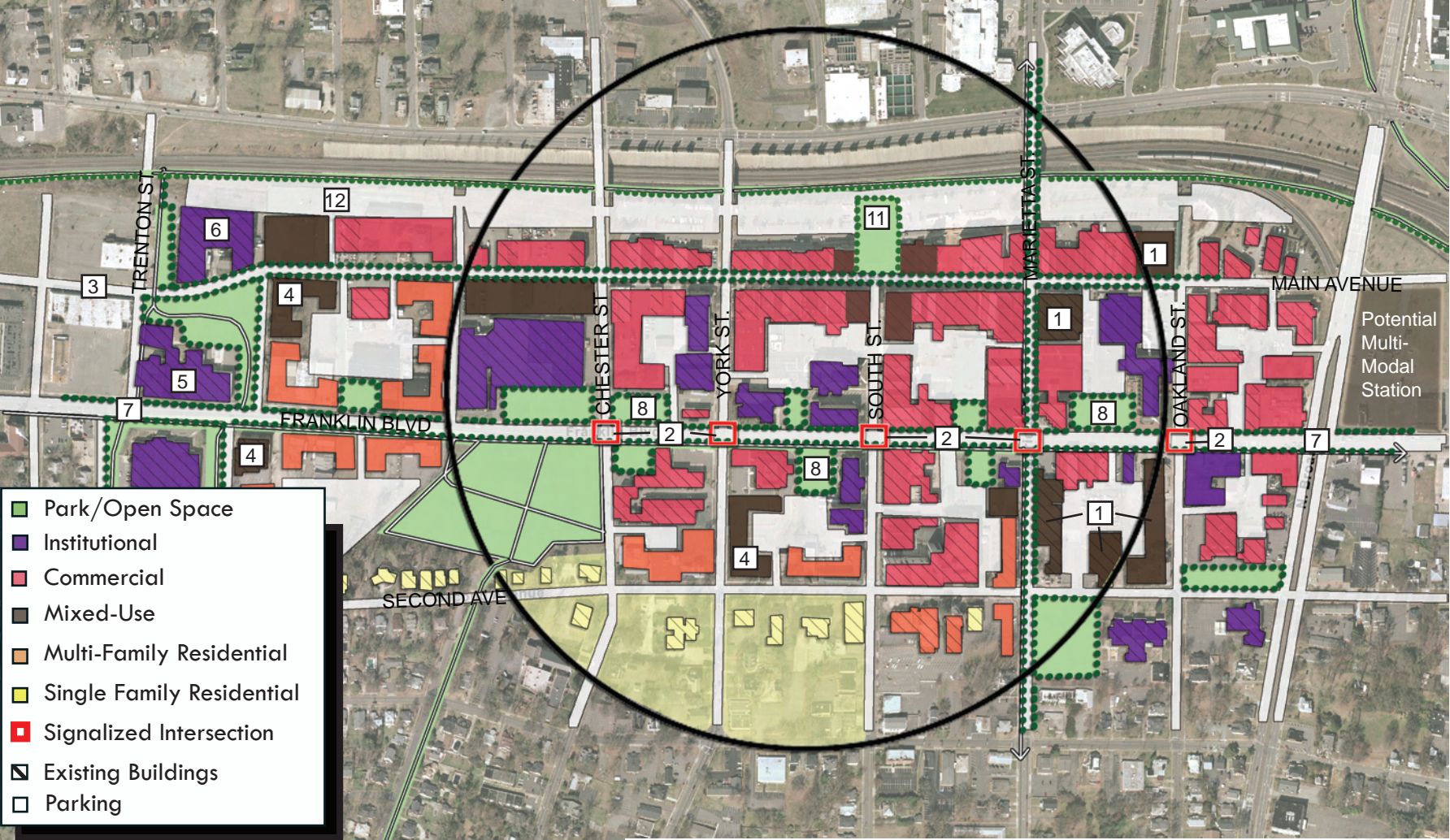


-  Intersection Improvements on Franklin Boulevard at: Oakland Street, Marietta Street, South Street, York Street, and Chester Street.
-  Pedestrian improvements on Franklin Boulevard.

-  Mixed use developments
-  Community Art Center, art galleries and other art related amenities

DOWNTOWN

Mixed Use Redevelopment and Open Space Infill

















- Park/Open Space
- Institutional
- Commercial
- Mixed-Use
- Multi-Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Signalized Intersection
- Existing Buildings
- Parking

Circle equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk



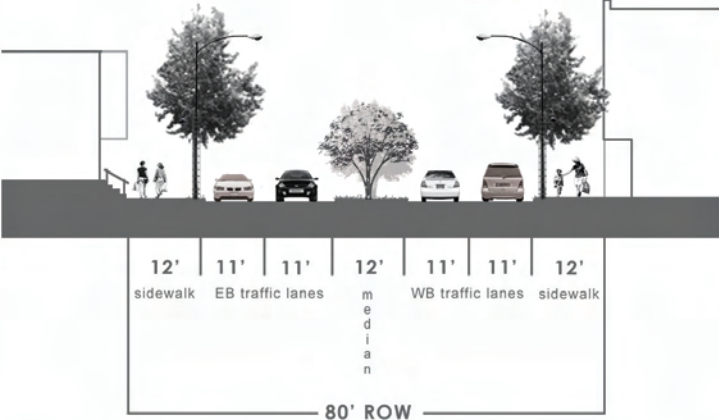
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Mixed Use (Commercial Retail + Office) Developments (~ 40,000 to 50,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
2	Intersection Improvements to enhance pedestrian connectivity across Franklin Blvd. at Oakland St., Marietta St., South St., York St., and Chester St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	intersection imp.
3	Multi Use Trails on Main Ave. through the Downtown Area.		Phase II (6-10 years)	transportation plan
4	Mixed Use (Residential + Retail) Development - SE corner of Franklin Blvd. and Clay St. (~150,000 to 200,000 sq.ft.) (includes rehabilitation of Armory building) - SE corner of Main Ave. and Clay St. (approx. 50,000 sq.ft.) - NE corner of Second Ave. and York St. (approx. 45,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
5	Community Art Center on Franklin Blvd. between Clay St. and Tremont St. (~ 60,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	NA
6	Art Galleries and other art related amenities on NE corner of Second Ave. and Tremont St. (approx. 40,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	NA
7	Gateway Signage into Downtown from East (Broad St.) and West (Trenton St.) on Franklin Blvd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
8	Civic open spaces along Franklin Blvd. - Between Oakland St. and Marietta St. (~ 180,000 sq.ft.) - Between York St. and Chester St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	facilities plan
9	Downtown Trolley Service to Loray Mill.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
10	Pedestrian improvements on Franklin Blvd. in Downtown.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
11	South Street Park along railroad track on S. South St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan
12	Additional parking along railroad tracks between Trenton St. and Chester St.		Phase I (1-5 years)	parking regs.
13	Expand Downtown National Register Historic District.		Phase II (6-10 years)	historic preservation

 Public  Private  Partnership

ENHANCED ROADWAY SECTION

Franklin Boulevard between South Street and York Street



Existing Conditions



New crosswalks, curbs, flower beds + street lighting



Street trees + planted median

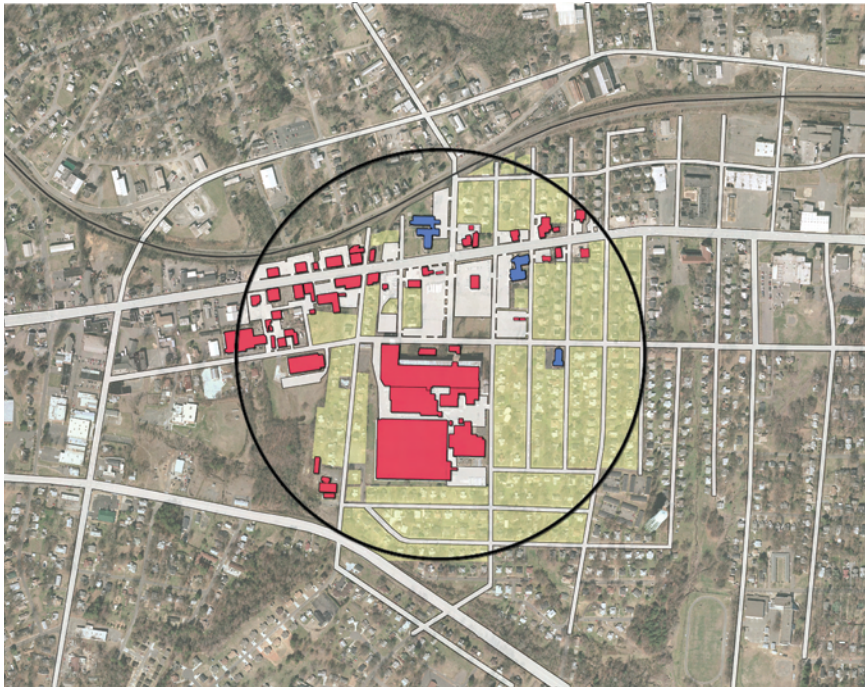
ENHANCED DOWNTOWN STREETScape

Redevelopment and streetscape enhancements should connect both sides of the street, transforming the corridor at key points from a barrier into a true gateway to the city that links destinations. Through the downtown streets, Franklin Boulevard would live up to its name and become a true urban boulevard. This means extensive median plantings and shade trees, wide sidewalks with pedestrian scaled lighting, and activated storefronts and institutions with ample outdoor seating. In addition, traffic lanes of 11' instead of 12' help to slow down traffic through the downtown blocks and allow for wider sidewalks.

The presence of a median would serve the dual roles of managing access to enhance vehicle flow along the corridor while also softening the roadway by reducing travel speeds for the fast stretches of the roadway, adding a tree canopy for a true boulevard feel and giving pedestrians a safe refuge area while crossing.

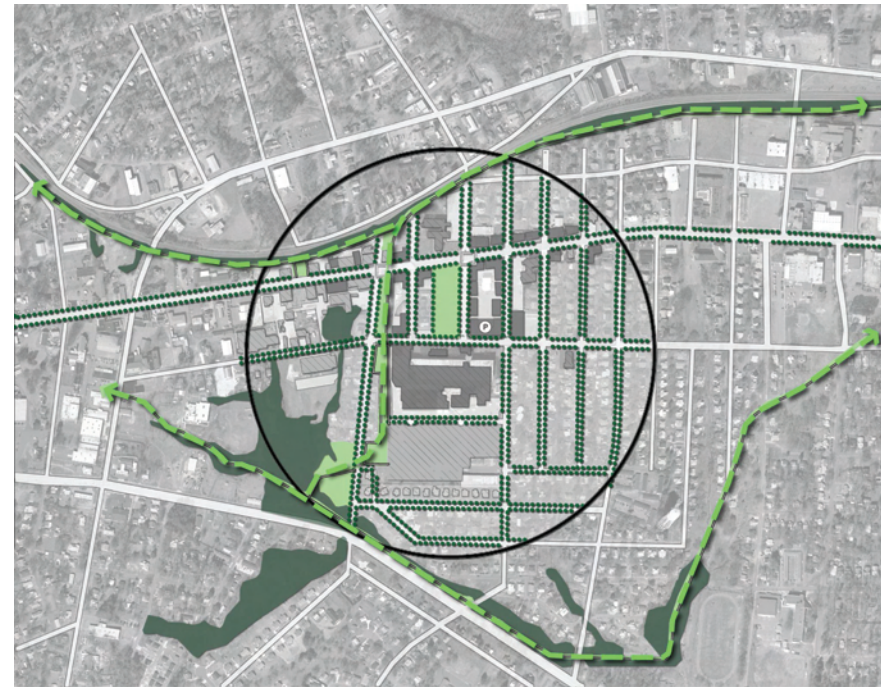


GREASY CORNER / LORAY MILL VILLAGE

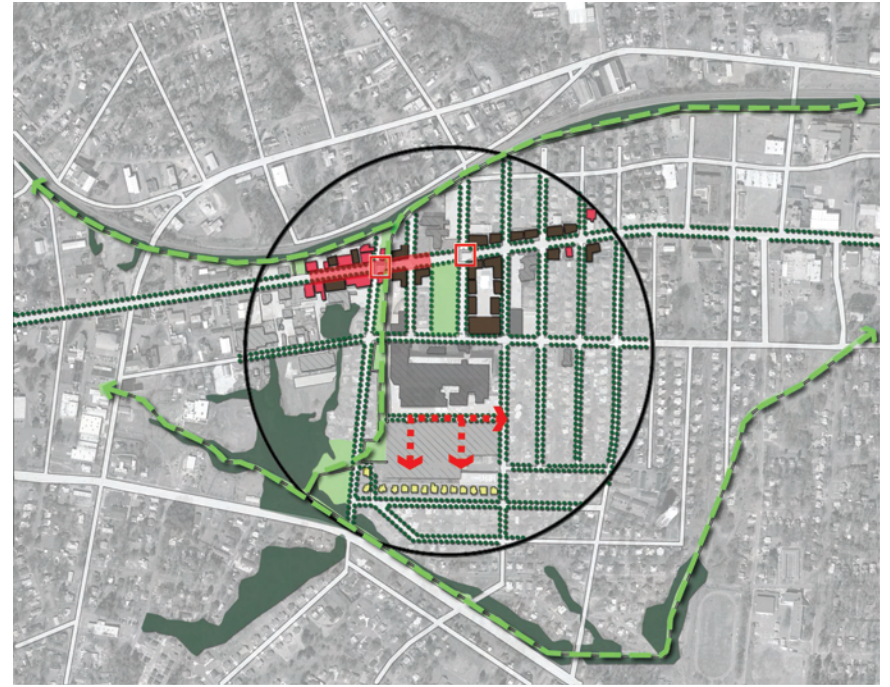
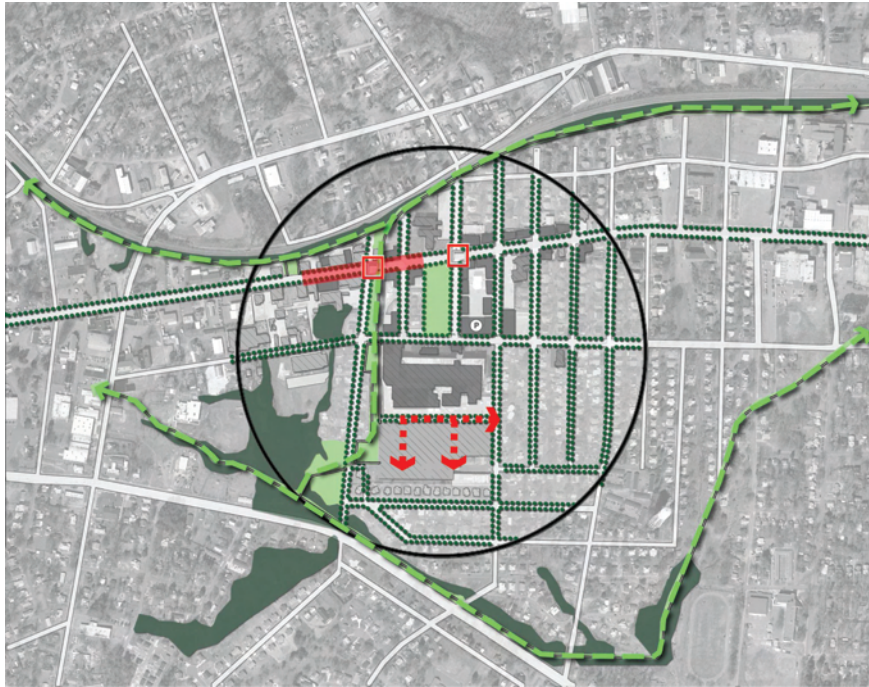


Existing Conditions

The historic Loray Mill Village currently consists of a mix of single family residential housing and under-utilized or vacant commercial buildings. Plans are in the works to redevelop the front portion of the old Loray Mill into a mixed use building with commercial, civic, and residential uses.



- New Multi-use trail along W. Main Avenue connecting Dixie Village via Webb Street School and new trail spur along the railroad connecting to the proposed greenway trail running along the stream adjacent to Garrison Boulevard.
- New trailhead/pocket park between Vance Street and Linwood Road and new civic open space between Franklin Boulevard and 2nd Avenue, adjacent to Firestone Street.

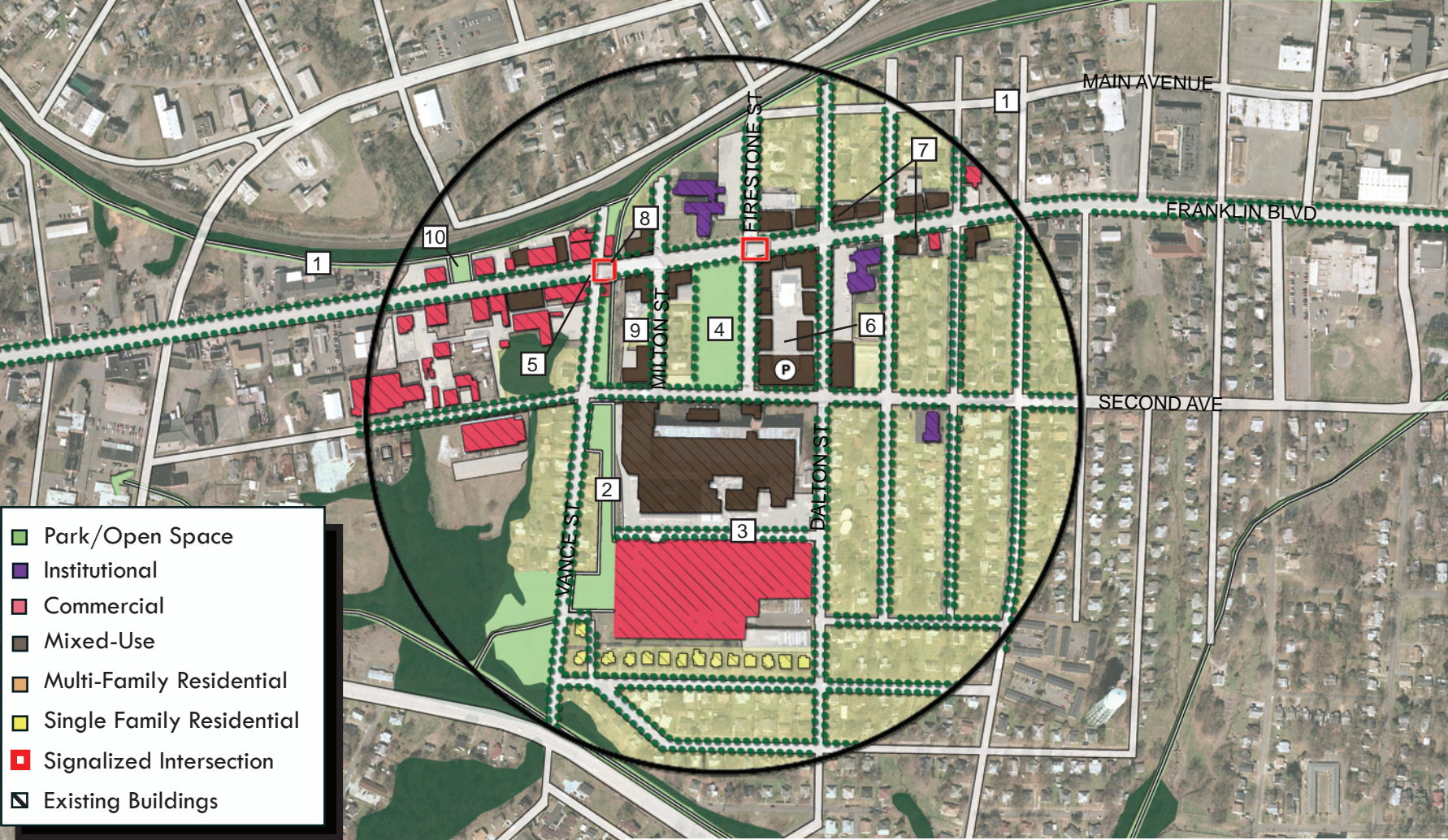


- New traffic signal at Vance Street and Franklin Boulevard for greenway crossing
- - New local street network adjacent to Loray Mill property
- ▬ Pedestrian, streetscape, and facade improvements at intersection of Vance Street and Franklin Boulevard to re-establish “Greasy Corner” as a neighborhood focal point that provides small scale retail, professional office and supportive uses

- Commercial re-development on under-utilized parcels fronting Franklin Boulevard.
- Mixed use redevelopment on under-utilized parcels on Franklin Boulevard. Mixed-use residential redevelopment on block bounded by Franklin Boulevard, Firestone Street, 2nd Avenue, and Dalton Street.
- New single family housing along Milton Street and Ransom Street on vacant parcels.










GREASY CORNER/ LORAY MILL VILLAGE




Mixed Use Redevelopment with Open Space + Greenway Network



Circle equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk

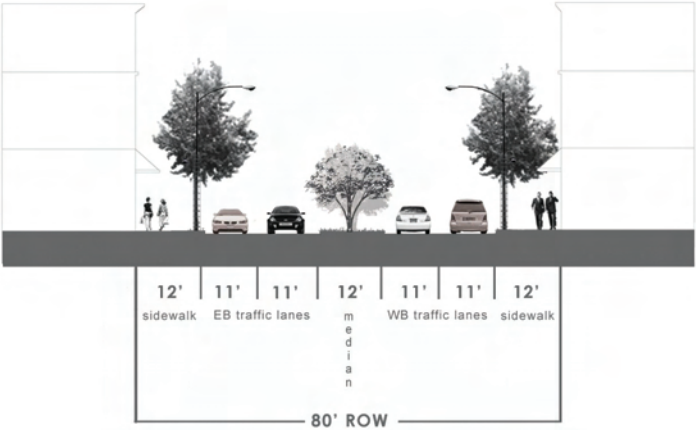
KEY PROJECTS Investment Timeline Regulations

1	Develop mixed use trail along W. Main Ave. from downtown connecting to Dixie Village via Webb St. School.		Phase I (1-5 years)	greenway plan
2	Develop multi-use trail spur from main trail along RR between Milton and Vance to the proposed greenway trail running along the stream adjacent to Garrison Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
3	Develop local street network adjacent to Loray Mill property, with same block dimensions as surrounding mill village.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
4	Create civic open space between Franklin Blvd. and 2nd Ave., adjacent to Firestone St. (approximately 1 acre).		Phase II (6-10 years)	facilities plan
5	Re-establish “Greasy Corner” at intersection of Vance and Franklin Blvd. through widened sidewalks and facade grants to help offset the removal of building fronts during a prior expansion of Franklin Blvd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan
6	Encourage infill mixed-use residential redevelopment of block bounded by Franklin Blvd., Firestone Street, 2nd Ave., and Dalton St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
7	Mixed-use Commercial/residential redevelopment on underutilized parcels along Franklin Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
8	New signalization at Vance and Franklin to allow for greenway crossing.		Phase II (6-10 years)	intersection imp.
9	Infill new single family housing along Milton St. and Ransom St. on vacant parcels.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
10	Develop trailhead/pocket park with parking adjacent to multi-use trail on north side of Franklin Blvd. between Vance St. and Linwood Rd.		Phase I (1-5 years)	facilities plan

 Public  Private  Partnership

ENHANCED ROADWAY SECTION

Franklin Boulevard between Vance Street and Milton Street



Existing Conditions



New crosswalks, street lighting + greenway x-ing



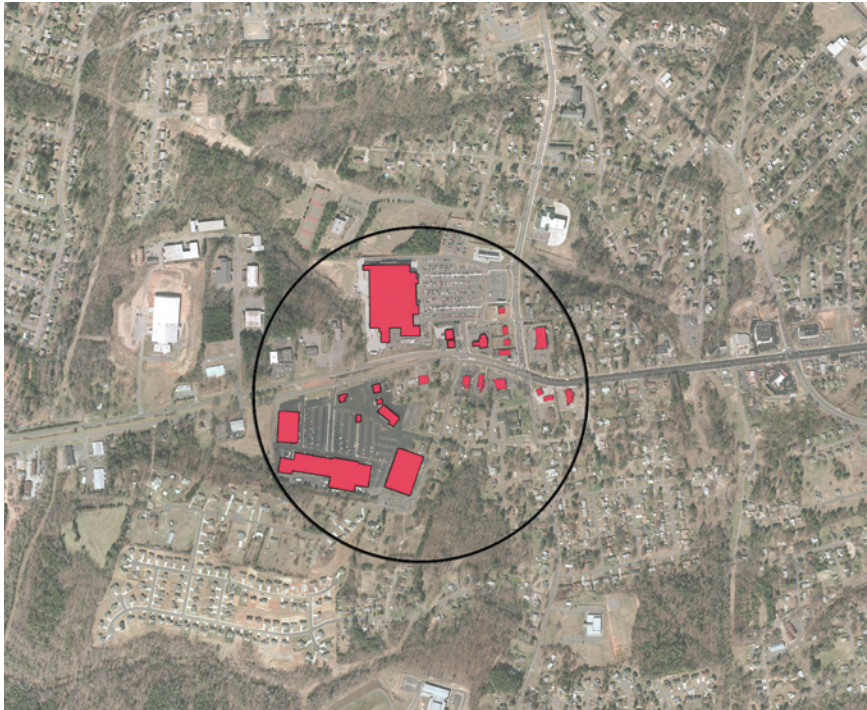
Street trees + planted median

ENHANCED GREASY CORNER/LORAY MILL VILLAGE STREETScape

The master plan envisions reclaiming Franklin Boulevard in the area around Loray Mill in the area around Loray Mill as a neighborhood center. This can be accomplished through in-fill redevelopment and inviting street facades - reestablishing in some cases the building fronts that were taken with an earlier expansion of Franklin Boulevard. This location also serves as a potential crossing for the greenway network, connecting the neighborhoods north of the corridor with the revitalized mixed-use Loray Mill via the old railroad spur that previously crossed Franklin Boulevard at this location

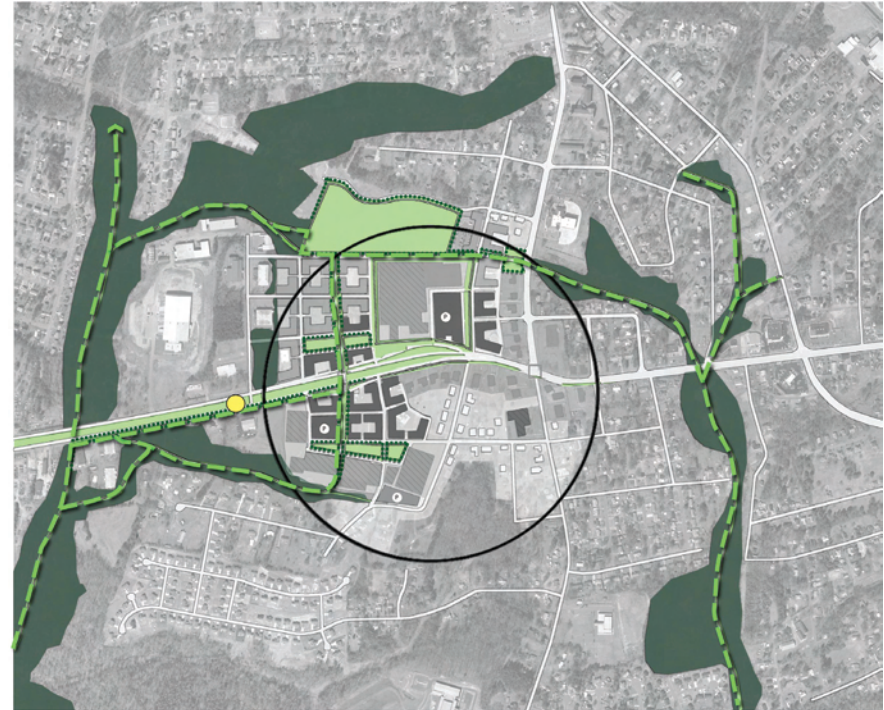


DIXIE VILLAGE/ MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD GATEWAY

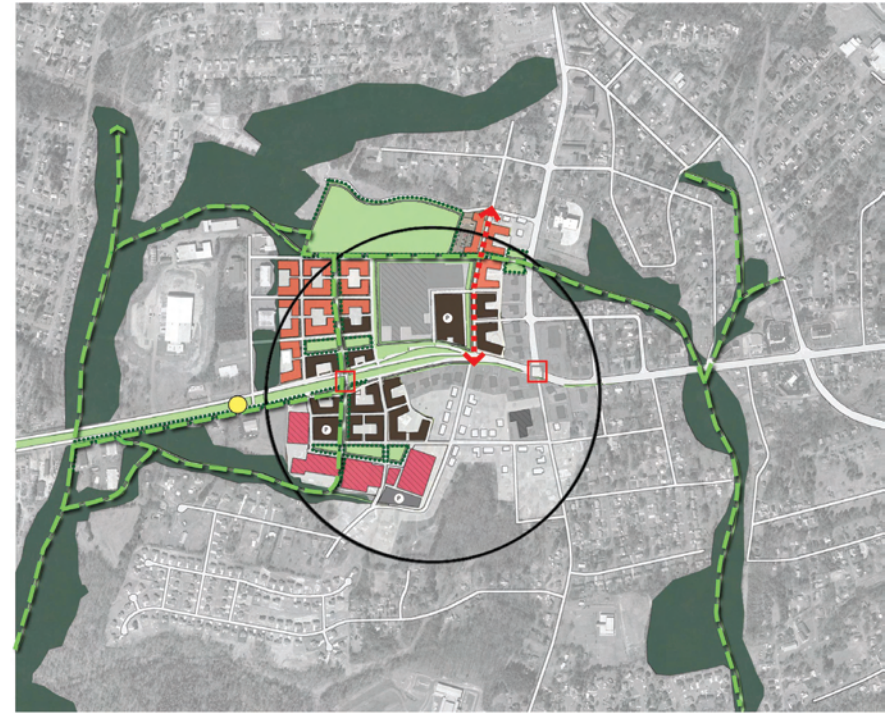
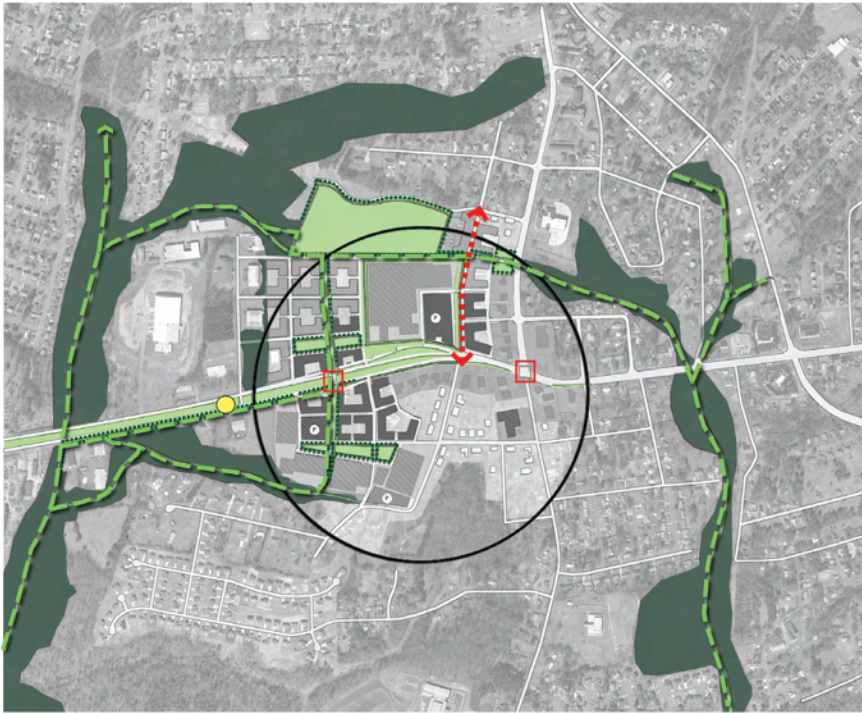


Existing Conditions

Currently the western gateway into Gastonia along Franklin Boulevard, this is an area where Franklin Boulevard transitions from a high speed divided rural highway into a more urban roadway with retail and residential development. It is characterized by an aging strip commercial center (Dixie Village) across from a new strip commercial center (Walmart Supercenter). Much of the surrounding residential areas are not accessible to the commercial developments other than by automobile.



- — New Multi-use trail connects north and south sides of Franklin Boulevard.
- New parks and open space located north and south of Franklin Boulevard and tying into a renovated Dixie Village with new residential development.
- Landmark/public art marking the entry into Gastonia from the west

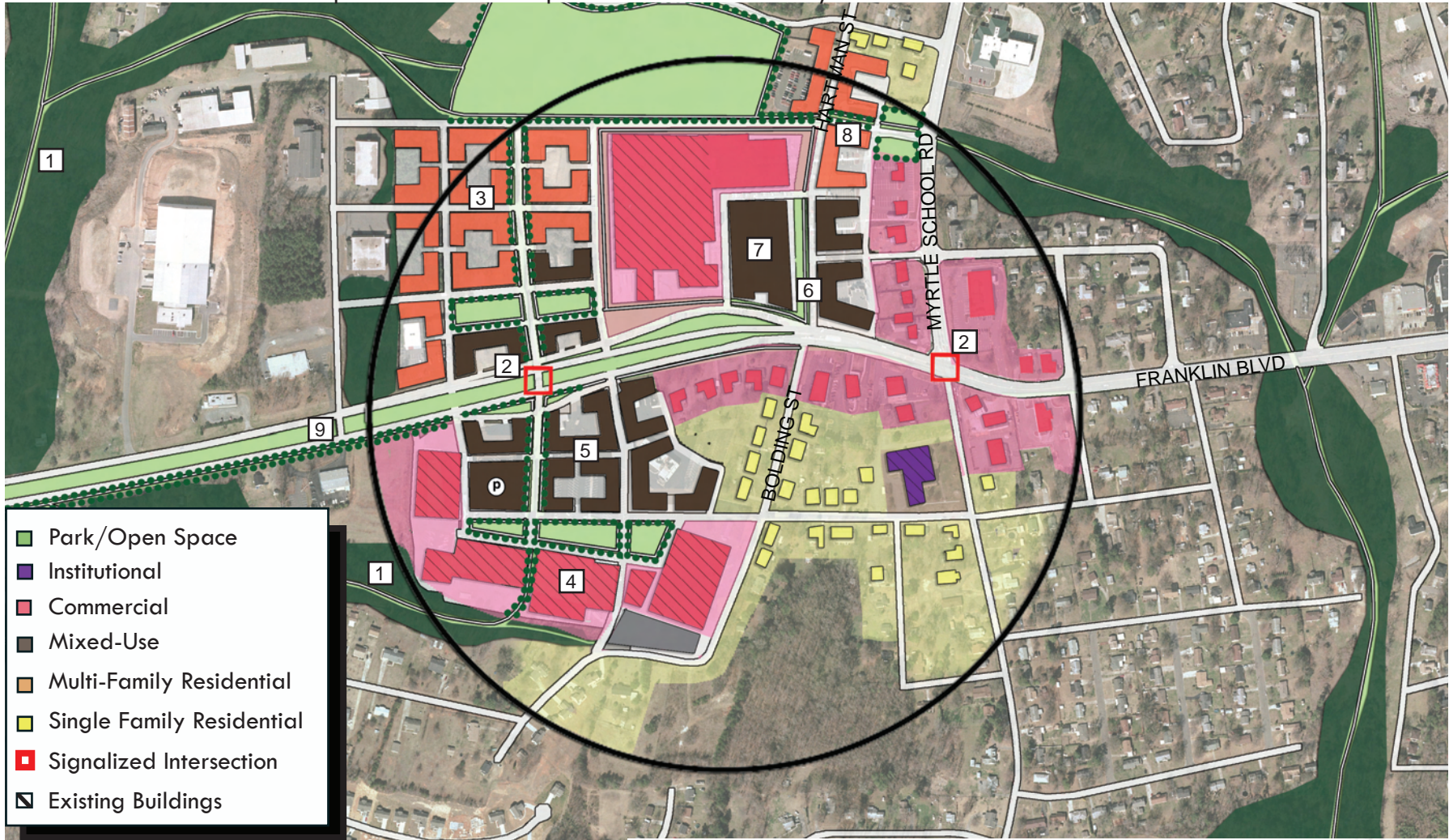


- ▣ Intersection Improvements: at Franklin Boulevard and Myrtle School Road and at the entrance to Dixie Village.
- - New connection between Bolding Street and Hartman Street through the Walmart site.

- ▣ Renovation of Dixie Village shopping center
- ▣ Mixed use residential development North of Franklin Boulevard and west of Walmart
- ▣ Residential development along the connection of Bolding and Hartman Streets










DIXIE VILLAGE/ MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD GATEWAY MASTER PLAN




Mixed Use Infill Redevelopment with Transportation + Greenway Networks



Circle equal to 1/4 mile radius, or a 5 minute walk

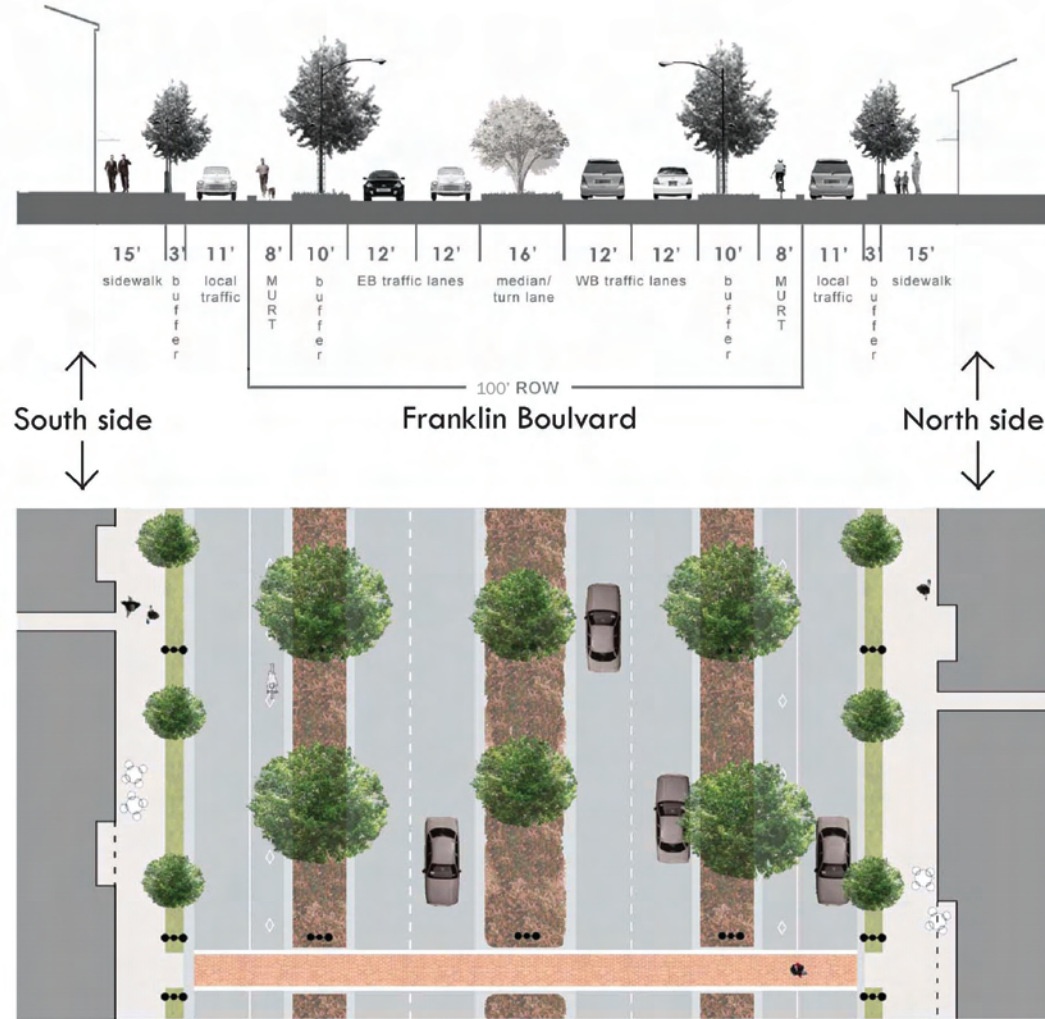
KEY PROJECTS

		Investment	Timeline	Regulations
1	Multi-use trail on south and north sides of Franklin Blvd.		Phase II (6-10 years)	greenway plan
2	Intersection improvements at Franklin Blvd. and Myrtle School Rd. and at the entrance to redeveloped Dixie Village.		Phase I (1-5 years)	intersection imp.
3	Residential development (~ 32 acres with 8 to 12 dwelling units/acre) with neighborhood retail (approx. 30,000 sq.ft.) and open space (~45,000 sq. ft.) north of Franklin Blvd. and west of Walmart.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
4	Renovation of Dixie Village Shopping Center as a lifestyle center (~ 300,000 sq. ft.) with additional structured parking facility (approx. 72,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	redevelopment
5	Mixed Use residential development (~ 40 acres with 4 to 8 dwelling units/acre) with neighborhood/community retail (~ 100,000 sq.ft.), open space (~ 52,500 sq.ft.) and structured parking (~ 130,000 sq.ft.) within the Dixie Village Shopping center site.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
6	Connect Bolding St. and Hartman St. through Walmart site.		Phase I (1-5 years)	transportation plan
7	Structured parking facility for Wal-Mart (approx. 240,000 sq.ft.) with convenience retail at ground level (approx. 15,000 sq.ft.)		Phase II (6-10 years)	parking regs.
8	Residential development (approx. 10 acres with 15 to 18 dwelling units/acre) along the connection of Bolding St. and Hartman St.		Phase II (6-10 years)	zoning change
9	Create landmark/public art marking entrance to Gastonia from the west.		Phase I (1-5 years)	streetscape plan

 Public  Private  Partnership

ENHANCED ROADWAY SECTION

Franklin Blvd. at entrance to Dixie Village



Existing Conditions



New crosswalks, curbs + street lighting



Street trees + planted median

ENHANCED DIXIE VILLAGE/ MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD GATEWAY

The master plan envisions creating a true gateway to enhance the transition from the rural high-speed roadway from the west as it enters Gastonia. This gateway would be located near the intersection of Franklin Boulevard and Myrtle School Road. Mixed-use in-fill development that meets the street helps create a walkable district that forms a destination at the under-utilized Dixie Village shopping center and connects it to the new Walmart shopping district.





V

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY



2030 LRTP PM Peak v/C Ratio	
Blue	0.00 – 0.80
Green	0.80 – 0.95
Yellow	0.95 – 1.05
Orange	1.05 – 1.20
Red	> 1.20

Overview

The Franklin Boulevard corridor has and always will be a major transportation corridor. Historically, the primary thoroughfare through the city, it now functions as part of a regional transportation network. The road serves as both a “main” street and as the incident management overflow for I-85. With these multiple demands placed on the corridor, it is important to design and enhance the roadway in a manner that can accommodate the vision laid out in this master plan while preserving its mobility.

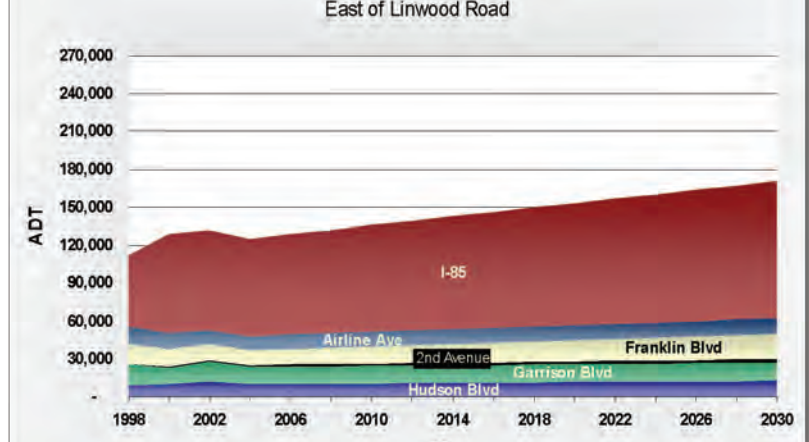
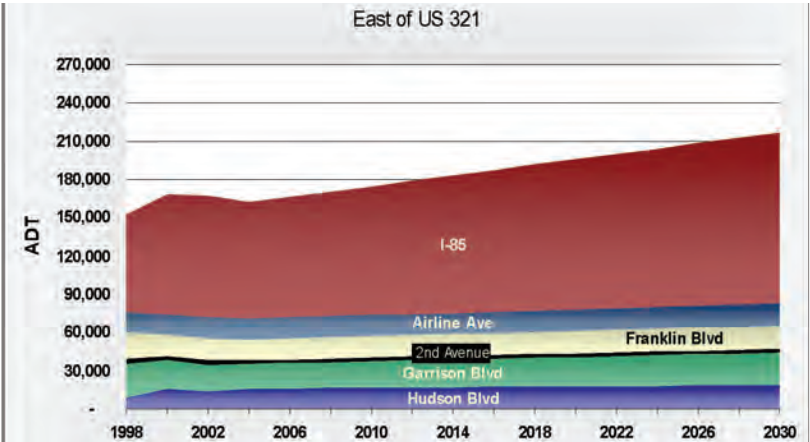
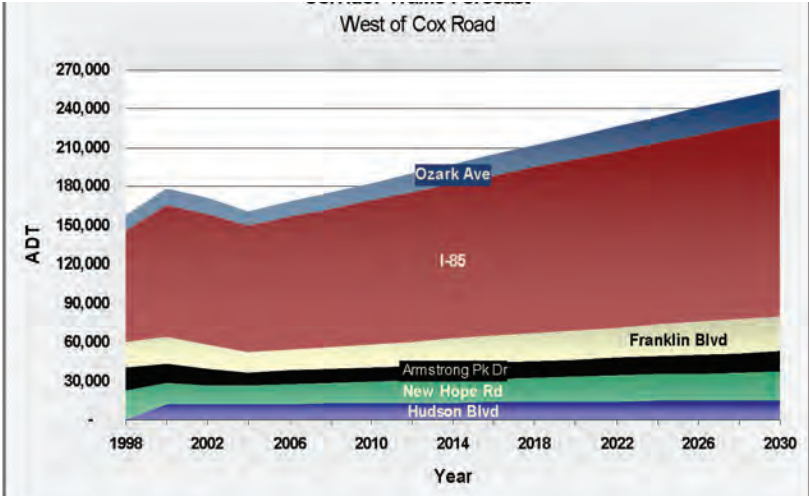
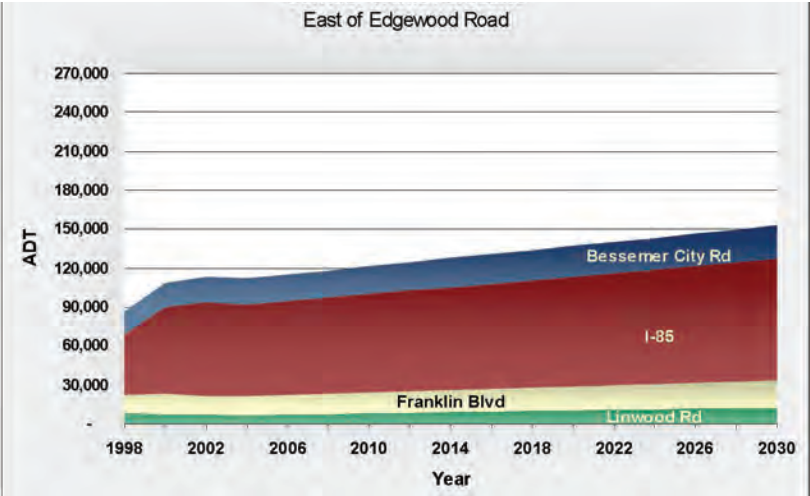
Franklin Boulevard will remain well below capacity in the year 2030, according to projections from the Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation model. Consistent with the trend scenario described in a previous section, capacity will be significantly degraded along the eastern and western most segments of the corridor in the City of Gastonia. This is a direct result of the project land use patterns for those portions of the corridor, as well as the lack of roadway network connectivity. The goal of this corridor master plan is to set up a framework for lowering the congestion along portions of Franklin Boulevard while enhancing the design and place-making attributes throughout.

Creating a parallel and interconnected network of local streets or even alleyways does several things for mobility and access along Franklin Boulevard. First, by creating smaller block lengths over time

through redevelopment, it reduces walking distances and brings future transit service closer to people’s destinations, in an environment that’s comfortable and has fewer barriers than trying to dodge traffic along a busy regional highway. Second, by distributing truck and auto traffic better across multiple roadways, it reduces traffic volume concentrating at one or two critical intersections. Traffic is more balanced and the signals can be better timed to move through traffic along Franklin Boulevard. Additionally, enhanced street connectivity improves emergency response and reduces delays caused by traffic crashes. As traffic volumes grow on the eastern segment of Franklin Boulevard, this interconnected street network will become an increasingly important aspect of preserving corridor mobility.

The following pages present the traffic analysis along the corridor, as well as concepts for enhancing key intersections along Franklin Boulevard in order to improve their walkability while maintaining their accessibility. In addition, some concepts are presented for access management of the corridor through downtown Gastonia. These include realigning and closing some of the existing driveways and curb cuts through the downtown blocks and create access from the side streets, which fits with the overall master plan in suggesting a series of pocket parks downtown.

Corridor Traffic Forecasts



Traffic Analysis

Analysis of traffic trends and forecasts for Franklin Boulevard (US 29/70) through Gastonia does not suggest that additional vehicular capacity is a priority need. Recent trends (1998 – 2004) indicate little or no ADT growth at various locations along Franklin Boulevard. In fact, 2004 traffic volumes are, at a number of locations, lower than they were in 1998. Overall, the same is true for other parallel arterials serving the same corridor (Garrison Boulevard, Ozark Avenue, Second Avenue, Airline Avenue, Hudson Avenue, Long Avenue, etc). Only I-85, the dominant east-west facility serving the corridor, shows substantial (although neither extreme nor uniform) growth.

Using the latest version of the Metrolina Regional Travel Demand Model based on the 2030 LRTP, traffic forecasts were estimated for major facilities in the study area by applying model-derived growth rates to existing traffic counts. Again, most of the traffic growth in the corridor occurs on I-85; increases on Franklin Boulevard and other east-west arterials are far less significant. According to the model, I-85 carries approximately one-half to two-thirds of the traffic in the corridor, with its share growing over time. Franklin Boulevard's share drops from around 15% to about 10%. (Note that this definition of corridor

volumes considers only those facilities included in the model, but these carry nearly all of the traffic in the corridor, especially longer trips.)

This analysis is concerned mainly with the corridor segment between Myrtle School and New Hope Roads, since it appears to have the most reserve capacity (at least in theory); is most likely to experience significant redevelopment; and has the greatest potential for large changes in traffic volumes.

East of Myrtle School Road, the 4-lane divided cross section should provide adequate capacity for anticipated growth, since the median inherently preserves capacity by limiting intersection conflicts. Careful access management is the critical need along this portion of the corridor.

The segment of Franklin Boulevard east of New Hope Road is mostly built out, with intensive retail and commercial development and little opportunity (or need) for widening beyond the current cross-section. Two planned road projects will help relieve traffic congestion along this portion of Franklin Boulevard, by providing parallel capacity and alternative access:

- Lineberger Road Extension: 4 lane w/ TWLTL and bridge across I-85 (2020)

- Gastonia-Mount Holly Connector: 4-lane divided (2030)

The critical capacity constraint for Franklin Boulevard is associated with intersection turning movements. Expansion of the road network north of I-85 in conjunction with the above projects will enhance connectivity and accessibility, reducing conflicts along Franklin Boulevard. Similar benefits will result from recommended improvements to the internal street network in the retail area bounded by Frankling, I-85, Cox and Main. Finally, proposed intersection channelization improvements, while intended primarily as pedestrian safety enhancements, could potentially improve signal efficiency (thereby increasing vehicle capacity) by reducing the length of minimum pedestrian green times by as much as 11 seconds.

Along the segment of Franklin Boulevard between Myrtle School and New Hope Roads, traffic forecasts for 2030 range from 20,000 to 30,000 vehicles/day. The six-lane and five-lane undivided cross-section that predominates between Myrtle School and New Hope Roads should provide a more than adequate level of traffic service for volumes in this range. However, given the emphasis on Franklin Boulevard's role as an alternate/

relief route for I-85 traffic, it seems reasonable to investigate whether the existing cross-section provides greater throughput capacity than would a 4-lane median-divided cross-section.

Other advantages of the 4-lane divided section can be readily demonstrated, since reducing conflict point typically improves both safety and capacity. Aesthetically, a planted median is commonly considered an enhancement. It also provides a refuge for pedestrians, in addition to reducing both the distance and number of lanes to be negotiated in crossing the street. Finally, the narrower cross-section provides opportunities for wider sidewalks or shoulders, bike lanes, on-street parking, and bus pull-outs.

The critical question, then, appears to be whether conversion to a four-lane divided cross-section would sacrifice too much throughput capacity. To answer this question, a sensitivity analysis was performed using ARTPLAN 2007, which is intended for conducting multimodal arterial level of service analysis for conceptual planning and preliminary engineering. Test runs were performed with a variety of cycle lengths, left-turn percentages, arrival types, speeds, and traffic signal spacing and timing assumptions. Since traffic forecasts are in-

herently uncertain, and since Franklin Boulevard's role as an alternate route for I-85 traffic could create traffic demands far in excess of standard forecasts, a range of volumes were tested. The table below summarizes results from a comparison of both cross-sections for volumes of 20,000, 30,000, and 40,000 vehicles/day. It also describes the basic assumptions used in the analysis. For all the situations analyzed, the 4-lane divided cross-section provided a level of traffic service equal or superior to that of a 6-lane undivided facility. Particularly significant is the finding that the relative benefits of the 4-lane divided facility increase as traffic volumes increase. In other words, the higher the traffic demand, the greater the marginal benefit provided by the 4-lane divided cross-section. This result was consistent over a range of assumptions, including:

- 90 second and 150 second cycle lengths;
- Arrival types 1, 3, and 6;
- Speeds of 30 – 45 mph;
- Signal densities of 3, 5, and 7 signals/mile;
- Mainline g/C ratios of 0.45 – 0.55;
- 12% and 15% left-turning traffic (Note that for the results tabulated below, it is assumed that 15% of traffic turns left at signalized intersections under the 4-lane divided scenario,

versus 12% for the 6-lane undivided. This reflects the effect of the median in eliminating mid-block left turns. But the 4-lane divided section performed better assuming either 12% or 15% left-turning traffic.).

Beyond mainline vehicular level of service, the 4-lane divided treatment also performs better in terms of potential bus and bicycle levels of service. This result is due mainly to the presence of a wider outside lane, with more room to accommodate bike lanes and/or bus stop pull-outs. Somewhat surprisingly – at least at first glance – the 6-lane undivided section rates slightly better in terms of pedestrian level of service. This is due entirely to the higher percentage of left-turning traffic assumed for the 4-lane divided case, which results in more potential conflicts. On the other hand, the 4-lane divided section could offer shorter crossing distances, and a pedestrian refuge island.

In summary, for the representative range of scenarios analyzed, having more through lanes does not necessarily provide greater vehicle capacity along an arterial corridor of this type. By reducing/managing left-turn conflicts, a well-designed 4-lane facility with a median can provide throughput capacity that is at least equivalent to

that of a 6-lane undivided thoroughfare, with added benefits to safety, aesthetics, and the levels of service available to other modes. Moreover, the relative capacity benefits of the 4-lane divided facility increase as traffic volumes increase, even without consideration of “aggressive” application of advanced ITS or signal control systems.

Two other points are also worth noting:

1. The “mobility” objective emphasized in the preceding discussion conflicts with “accessibility” objective that might be perceived as a higher priority to established businesses and some potential developments. At the relatively low volume/capacity ratios currently exhibited, mid-block left-hand turns can be made with relative ease, and minimal interference to/from other traffic. Under such conditions, the reduced accessibility resulting from addition of a median will probably be perceived as costing more than any benefits derived, and the whole idea deemed “overkill,” or a solution to a problem that does not really exist. As volumes increase, however, the additional traffic will create its own barrier to accessibility, with mid-block left turns becoming more difficult and dangerous, while at the same time effectively reducing capacity of the inner two lanes.
2. Beyond Franklin Boulevard and I-85, other parallel thoroughfares (both existing and planned) provide a significant amount of capacity, not to mention numerous lower-level (local and collector type) facilities. Consideration should be given to using this capacity more effectively, especially as part of an incident management plan.

ADT	Cross Section	v/c	LOS	Delay	Speed	Bike/Ped/Bus
20,000	6-lane undivided	0.59	B	16.38	28.5	D / C / E
	4-lane w/ med.	0.55	B	15.83	28.3	B / C / E
30,000	6-lane undivided	0.88	C	21.89	25.3	E / C / F
	4-lane w/ med.	0.82	C	20.50	25.3	B / D / E
40,000	6-lane undivided	1.15	F	90.99	11.3	E / D / F
	4-lane w/ med.	1.07	E	54.25	15.7	B / D / E
ASSUMPTIONS						
Global		Scenario Specific				
Class = II Speed = 40 mph Area = Urbanized PHF = 92.5% K = 9.5% D = 55% %HV = 3% Sat. Flow = 1,900 Local Adj. Fact. = 0.98 Control = Actuated Arrival Type = 3 Cycle Length = 90 sec Signals/mile = 5 g/C = 0.50 Left g/C = 0.10 Left turn storage = 250'	Cross Section	Number of Through Lanes	Left Turn Lanes	Median	% Turns at Signals	
	6-lane undivided	6	No	None	24% (12%L/12%R)	
	4-lane w/ median	4	Yes	Restrictive	27% (15%L/12%R)	
	Cross Section	Outside Lane Width	Bike Lane?	Sidewalk Separation		
	6-lane undivided	Typical	No	Typical		
	4-lane w/ median	Wide	Yes	Wide		

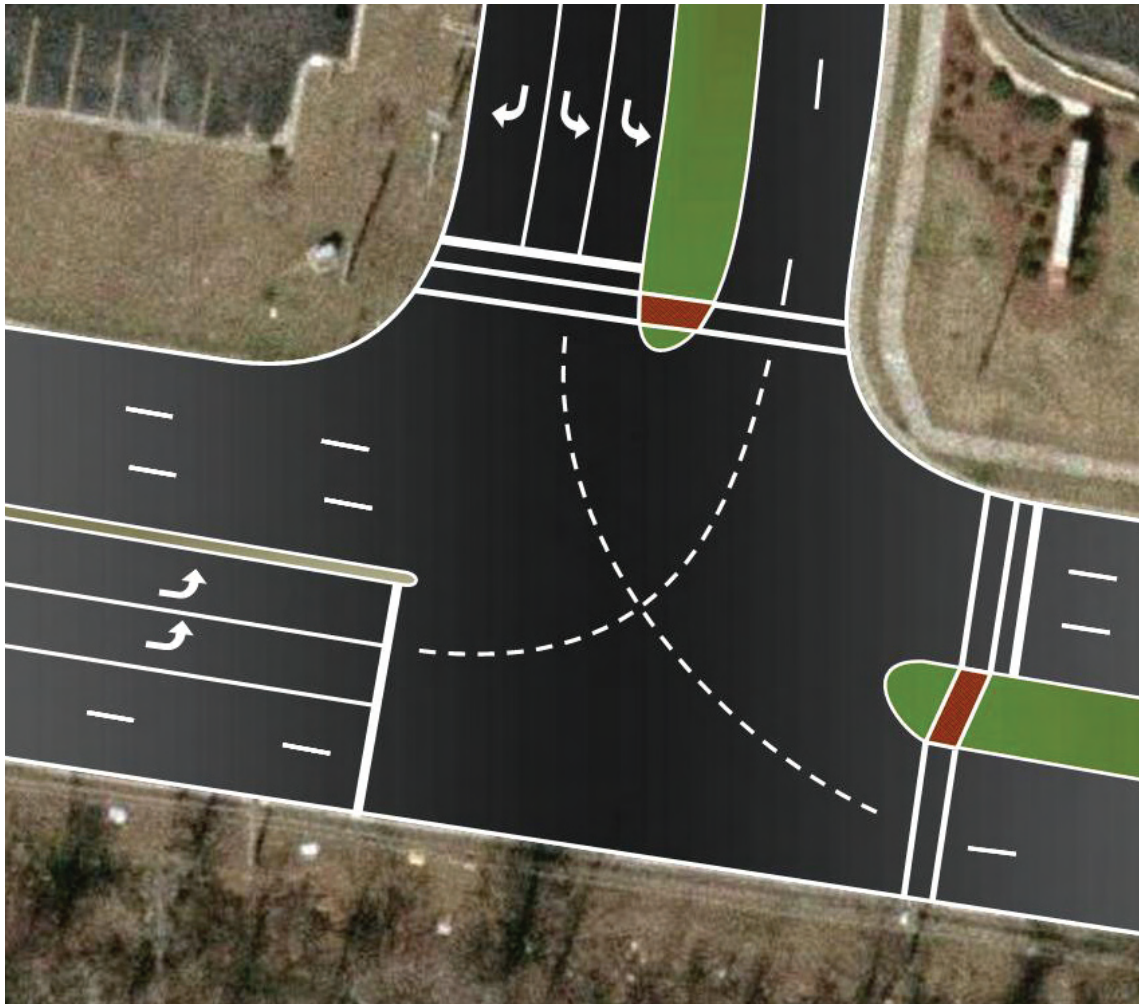
Left-turn Restrictions

The critical capacity constraint along the Franklin Boulevard corridor is due to turning conflicts – mainly left turns – at intersections. A strategy of prohibiting left turns at selected intersections while providing for them at more suitable locations offers a range of potential benefits:

- Traffic throughput can be preserved along Franklin Boulevard, even (especially?) during incidents on I-85.
- Pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety can all be improved by reducing conflict points. Those that remain can be channeled to locations where they can be dealt with most effectively.
- The need to widen Franklin Boulevard to accommodate turn lanes can be eliminated at certain intersections. This in turn can
 - Reduce crossing distances for pedestrians;
 - Allow for medians that enhance the corridor's appearance and provide pedestrian crossing refuges;
 - Increase traffic signal efficiency.
- Potential locations for left-turn restrictions along Franklin Boulevard include:
 - Between York Street and North Broad Street;
 - At minor streets in the vicinity of Greasy Corner/Loray Mill Village.



Enhanced Intersection



Note: Truck routes/restrictions could be considered a subset of the preceding discussion, with additional consideration being given to the suitability of roadway geometrics for truck travel.

Intersection Improvements

The impetus behind the conceptual intersection enhancements is to make pedestrian travel more attractive by reducing barriers and improving safety. Key elements include:

- Reducing crossing distances, typically accomplished with medians and islands which also serve as pedestrian refuges;
- Channelizing traffic to separate and delineate vehicle movements and isolate conflict points;
- Emphasizing both high-pedestrian locations and desired paths for pedestrian travel;
- Tempering vehicle speeds during turning movements.

The principal constraint to realizing the conceptual designs will be turning movement requirements for large trucks. Therefore, careful consideration of truck routing and the provision of viable alternative for truck access are critical to the successful implementation of these enhancements.

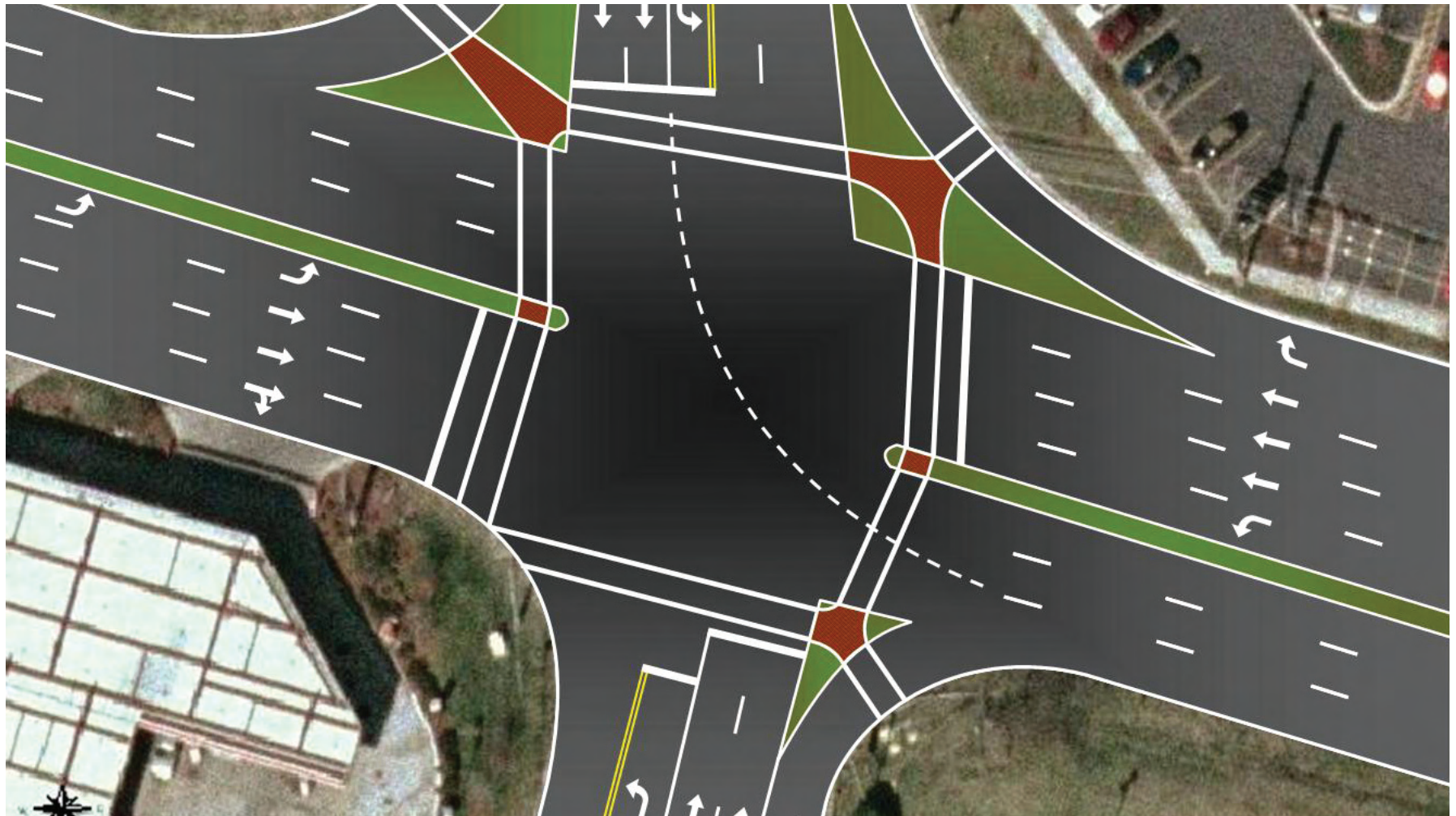
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at COX/ARMSTRONG PARK ROAD

Existing Intersection



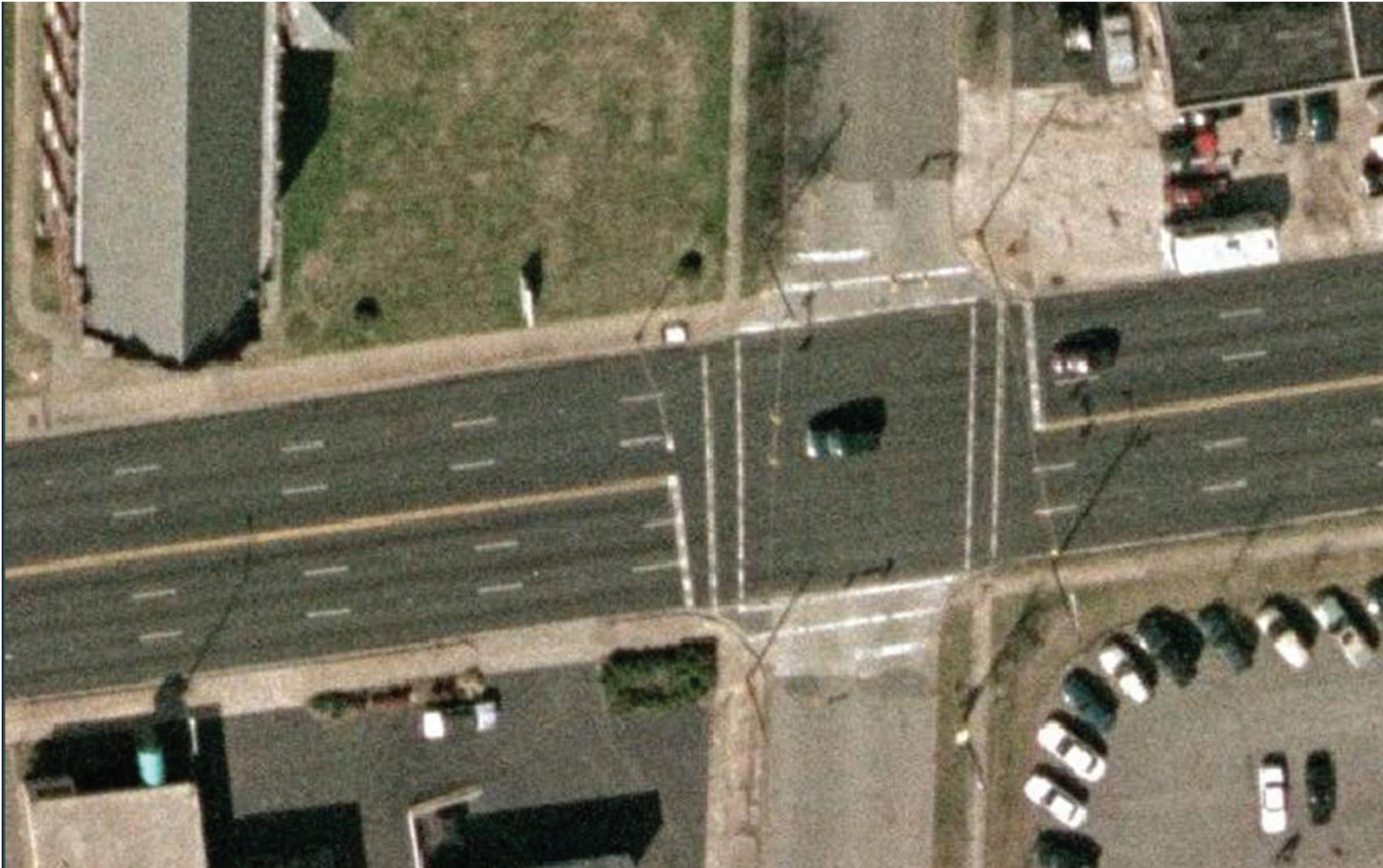
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at COX/ARMSTRONG PARK ROAD

Enhanced Intersection



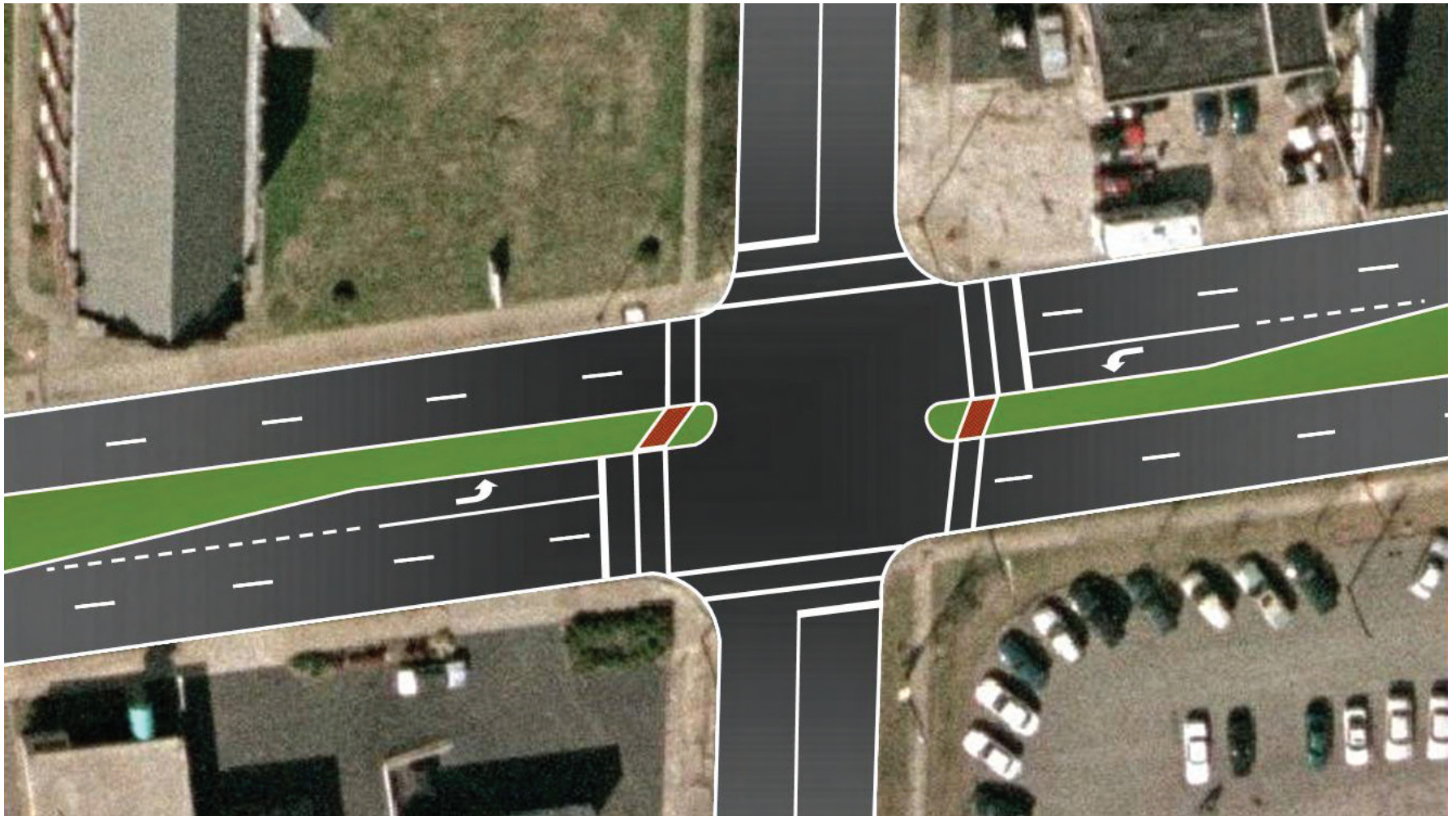
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at FIRESTONE STREET

Existing Intersection



FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at FIRESTONE STREET

Enhanced Intersection



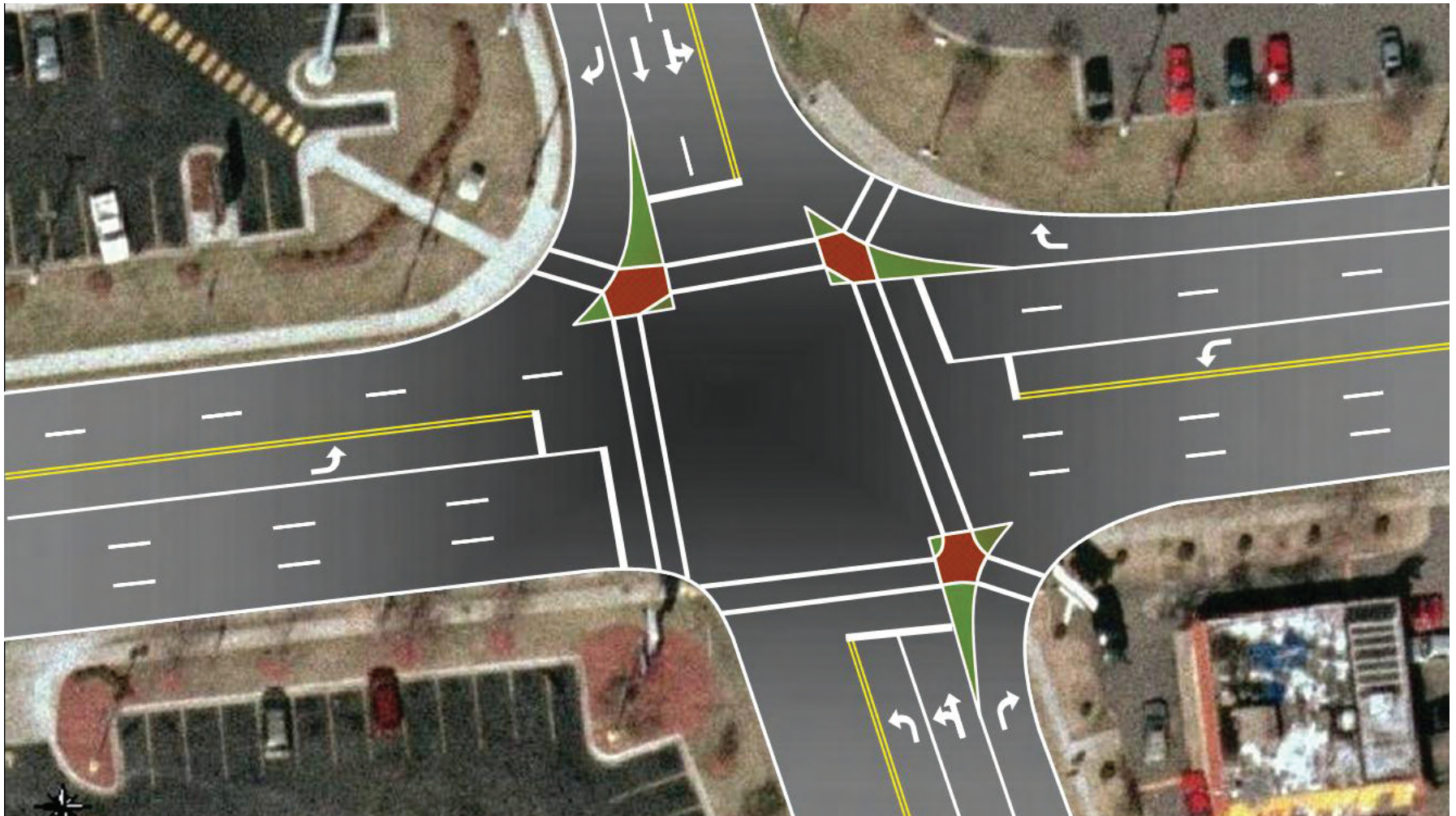
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at BESSEMER CITY/GARRISON ROAD

Existing Intersection



FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at BESSEMER CITY/GARRISON ROAD

Enhanced Intersection



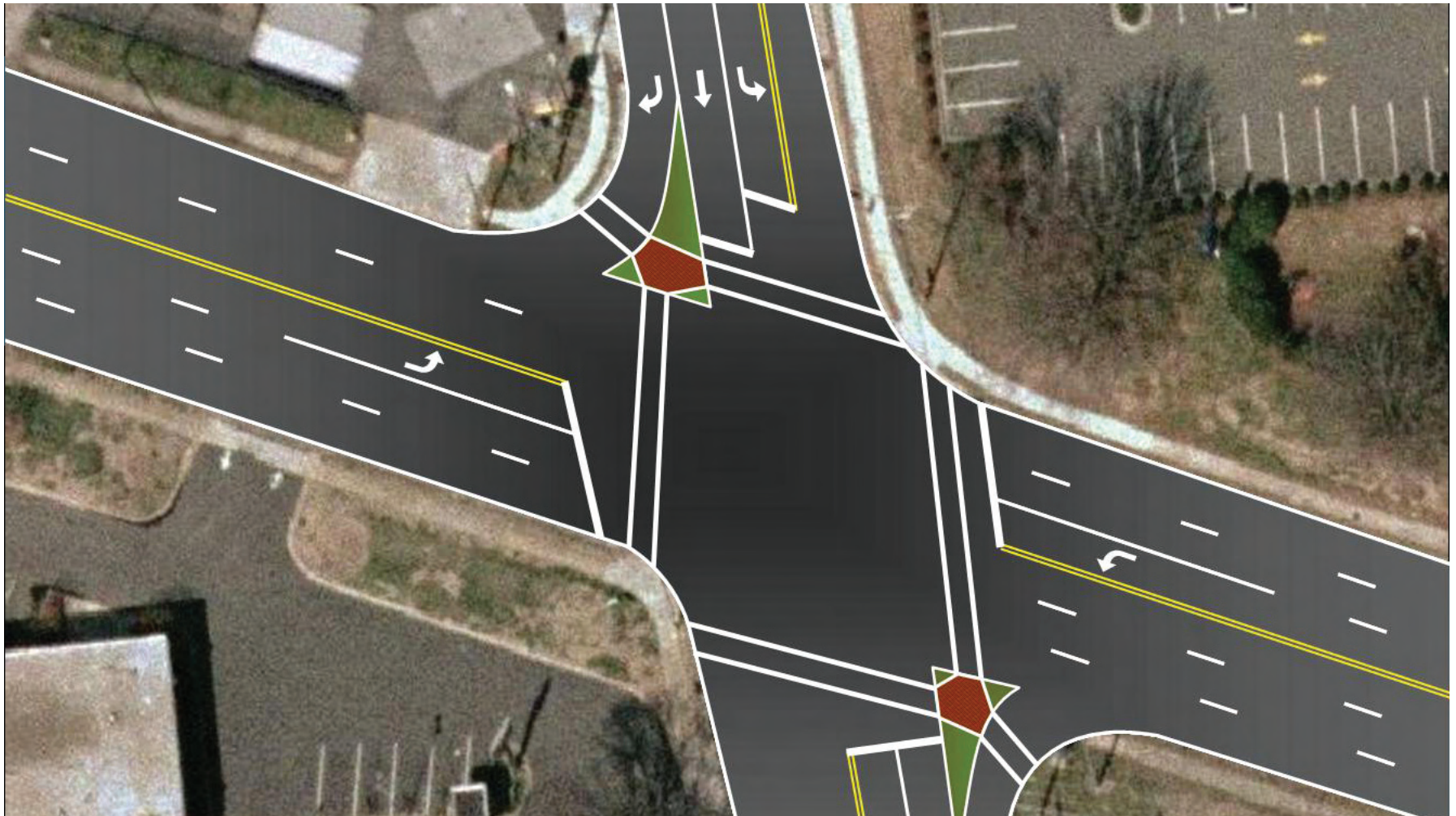
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD

Existing Intersection



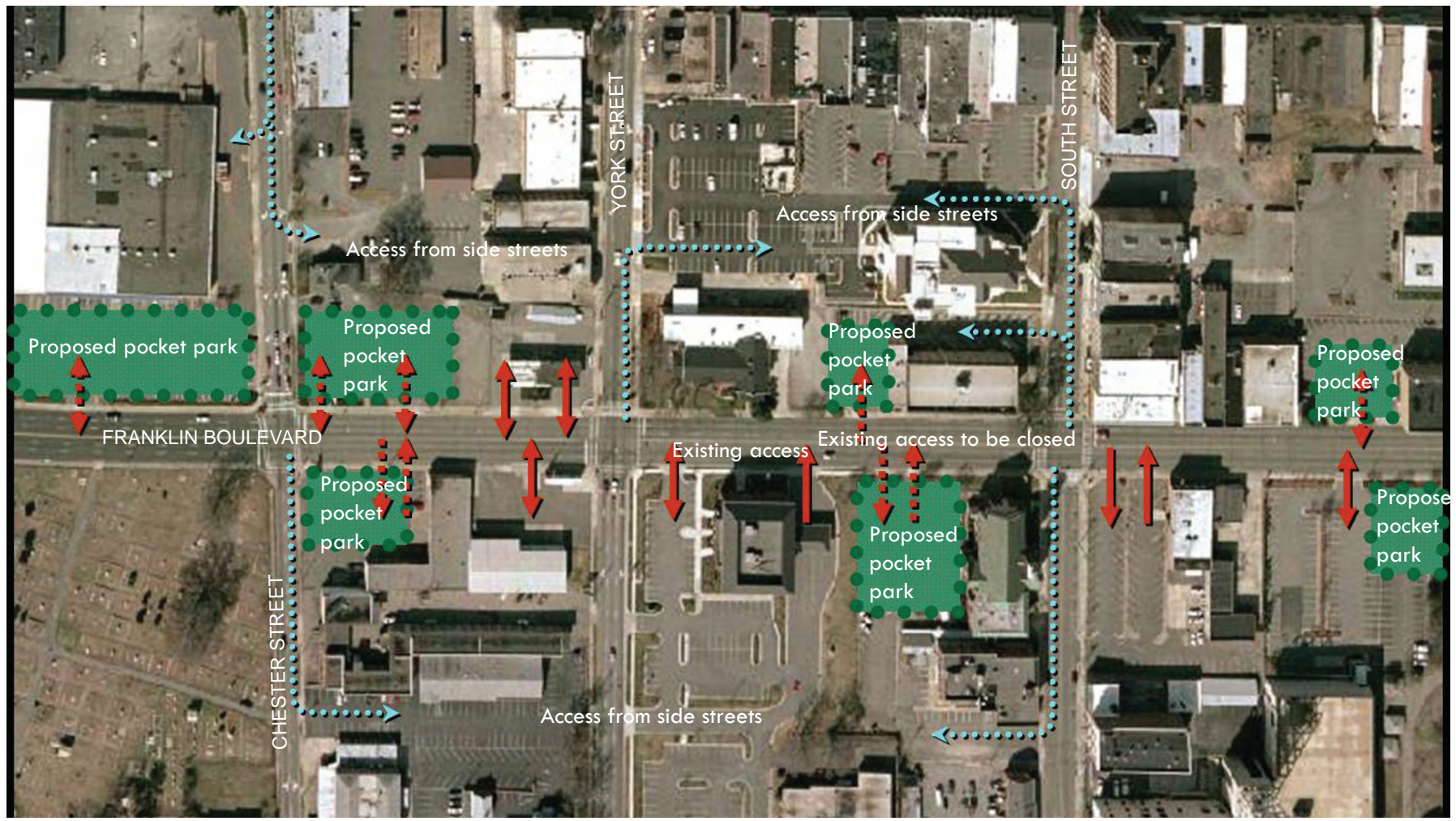
FRANKLIN BOULEVARD at MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD

Enhanced Intersection



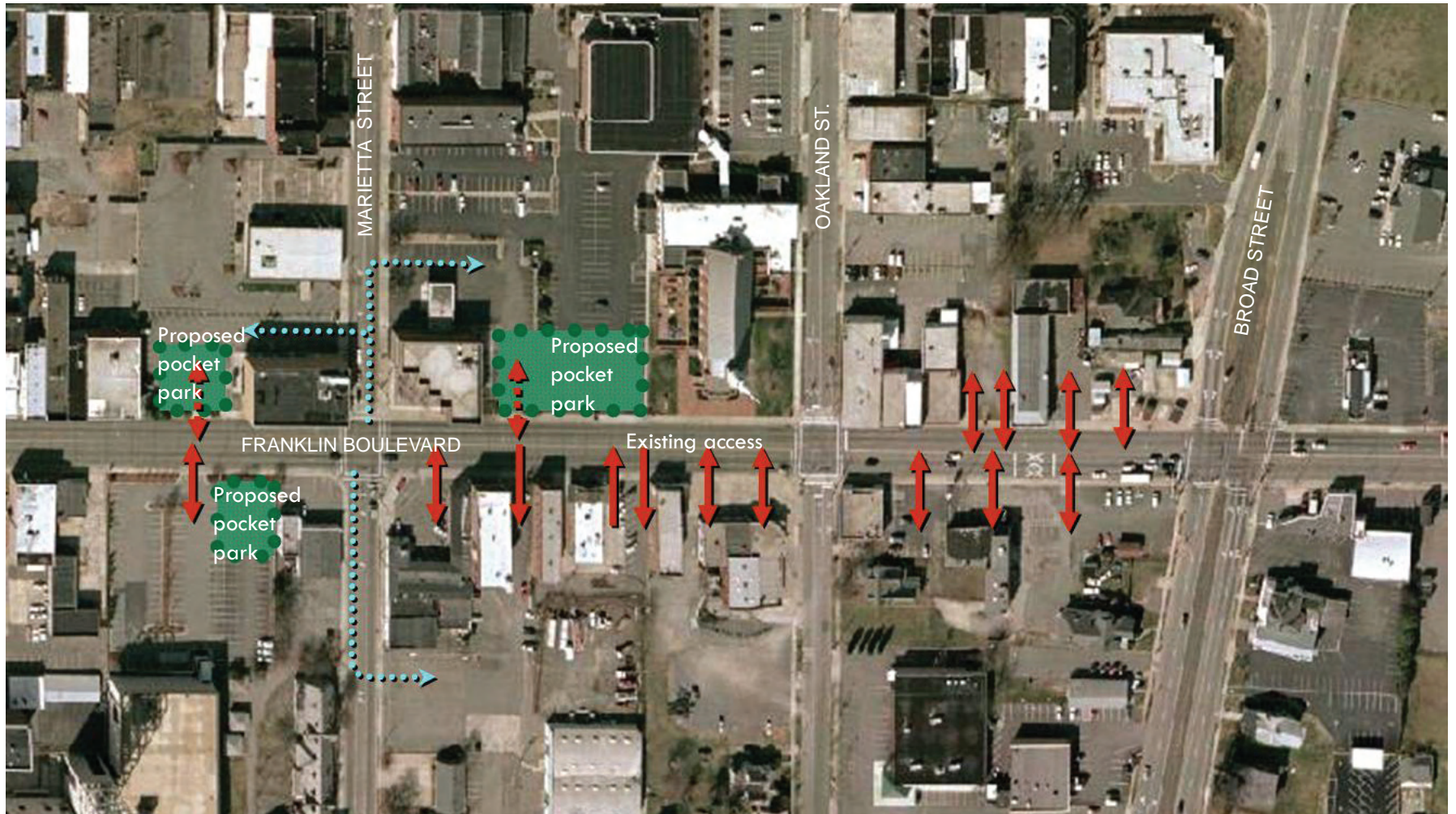
ACCESS MANAGEMENT

DOWNTOWN WEST



ACCESS MANAGEMENT

DOWNTOWN EAST





VI

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN & POLICY FRAMEWORK



Introduction

The Franklin Boulevard Corridor has a storied past, and has been the historical backbone of the City of Gastonia for both commerce and industry. Current conditions along the corridor do not reflect the significance and importance of this roadway, however, forming instead a collage of vacant and underutilized parcels mixed with a series of auto-oriented uses. This Corridor Master Plan illustrates those conditions, and shows what can be done to bring back vitality, activity, and value to this key section of the City. There is need, and there is possibility.

The key issue now is, how to achieve that vision? What steps need to be taken to take the corridor from here to there? How best to honor the street? Achieving the vision that is outlined in this Corridor Master Plan will require ongoing attention, advocacy, and new tools; but the ideas need to be implemented.

The approach to implementation of this Corridor Master Plan needs to be **multi-pronged**. Action is needed on a number of fronts simultaneously to implement these ideas. Attention is needed by the city and other governmental bodies, and also by private property owners. Partnerships will be important. The approaches to implementation can be categorized as follows, and discussed below:

Encourage Private Investment

Private investment in Franklin Boulevard Corridor properties needs to be sparked. Through civic appeals, construction of public improvements (as described below), and an array of regulatory incentives (as described below), private property owners need to be encouraged to invest in the Franklin Boulevard Corridor in ways that are consistent with the principles and guidelines identified in this plan. The City can articulate, through design guidelines and/or policy statements, the actions that it wishes private property owners to consider. Mixed-use development proposals should be encouraged throughout the corridor.

Direct Public Investment and Operational Changes

The most obvious and direct way to accomplish a physical change within the Franklin Boulevard Corridor is to use public resources to directly fund improvements and take the public actions to transform the character of the corridor. Recommendations for public improvements within public rights-of-way are identified in this Corridor Plan, and are organized below in terms of immediate (1-2 year time frame for implementation), short

term (Phase I: 1-5 year time frame), medium term (Phase II: 5-10 year time frame), and long term (10+ year time frame) possibilities. Suggestions for operational adjustments and staff initiatives are also identified.

Adjust Zoning Regulations

Encouraging private investment is a good idea. Directly funding public improvements is necessary for those large-scale projects that cannot be accomplished otherwise. It is also necessary to adjust the city’s current zoning regulations, to be able to influence the form of new private development and to assure that public improvements that are necessary to serve new development are provided as components of new development or redevelopment projects. Zoning amendments must be made in order to achieve the vision set out in the Corridor Plan. The timing is good right now for attention to zoning amendments. A current, separate initiative is underway (and nearing completion), which will result in a common set of zoning regulations to be used by all local governments in Gaston County, and will also set the stage well for Gastonia to prepare overlay districts to apply to portions of this corridor.

There are three types of zoning adjustments that should be considered: (1) Market-based adjust-

ments to allow activity that meets the objectives of the Corridor Plan; (2) Requirements that prescribe standards and procedures; and (3) Incentives to encourage activity of a type that cannot be required.

(1) Market-based Regulatory Adjustments: To the extent that there are actions currently prohibited that might be taken by private property owners, in response to market conditions, that would promote public objectives for the Franklin Boulevard Corridor, zoning regulations should be adjusted to allow these actions. Examples include adding residential uses as permitted uses in commercial districts, allowing small-scale commercial uses in residential districts, allowing accessory apartments in dwelling units in or close to downtown, and allowing existing downtown uses to expand without triggering additional parking requirements.

(2) Regulatory Requirements: Zoning regulations can also be adjusted in a manner that requires new development (or redevelopment) to meet more rigorous standards, and/or to provide public infrastructure that will be needed as a result of the development. Examples include requirements for off-site improvements and expanded landscaping requirements, or to mitigate traffic impacts through contribution to the development

of the greenway network or operation of a downtown trolley system.

(3) Regulatory Incentives: Zoning regulations can be adjusted in a manner that provides incentives for property owners to take actions that are in the public interest. Incentives could take the form of (1) Less stringent requirements if characteristics of proposed development are consistent with policy objectives; (2) streamlined process if development is proposed that is consistent with policy objectives; (3) Modifications of regulations and requirements if certain findings are met; and/or (4) Public participation in the financing of required infrastructure.

In pursuit of these ideas to amend zoning regulations, the approach could take one of two routes: Amendments to the base zoning districts covering downtown, or creation of one or more new overlay zoning districts.

All of these approaches should be pursued: Encouraging private investment, funding public improvements, making operational changes, and adjusting zoning regulations. Further discussion on each topic follows.

Encouraging Private Investment

The undertaking of this Corridor Plan by itself sends a message to property owners and potential developers along Franklin Boulevard: the City of Gastonia places high value on the character of this corridor, and welcomes partnership in improving the corridor. Property owners are encouraged to bring forward proposals for development and redevelopment within the corridor, with attention to the design ideas included in this Plan. The city will pursue regulatory adjustments (as described below). The city also offers the design ideas in this Plan as guidelines. Developers and property owners are encouraged to invest in properties within the corridor, particularly in the downtown portion and the western portions.

Subsequent to completion of this Corridor Plan, it is recommended that the city undertake preparation of **site-specific Design Guidelines** for use by property owners, developers, and staff in designing and reviewing development proposals within the corridor. Such guidelines would be non-binding; however, they would set forth expectations. To the degree that applicants can embrace the guidelines, review of applications could be expedited. Guidelines will differ in different parts of the corridor, but should generally address use, building orientation, and dimensional characteristics. Following are examples of design guideline principles that illustrate how guidelines might be written:

Uses: Mixed use development, including retail and residential uses, is encouraged throughout the Franklin Boulevard Corridor.

Building Orientation: Unless located on a corner lot, the long axis of new buildings should be consistent in orientation with the majority of other buildings on the same block face. In the case of corner lots, a new building should be compatible in orientation with the majority of other buildings addressed off the same street.

Entrances: For all new buildings, an operable building entrance should face the street. In the case of corner lots, the primary entrance(s) should face the street from which the building is addressed.

Setbacks: Front and side setbacks for new development and redevelopment should be within a fixed percentage (e.g., 25 percent) of the average of the existing setbacks found along the same block face.

Scale: The height of new development should not exceed a fixed percentage (e.g., 125 percent) of the average height of the structures found along the same block face, whichever is greater. Unless designed as a multiple component building, the building footprint area of any single structure should not exceed a fixed percentage (e.g., 150 percent) of the average size of other structures found along the same block face. (However, it may be desirable to allow for increased height

and intensity at critical nodes in the area, particularly downtown, to allow for strategically increased density.)

Location of Off-Street Parking and Loading Areas: Off-street parking and loading areas should not be located between the building and the street it fronts. To the maximum extent practicable, off-street parking and loading areas should be located as far as possible from existing single-family detached residential uses.

Street Trees: New developments should provide street trees in accordance with city standards.

Lighting: The existing street lighting conditions along a block face should be continued for all new development. Existing street lighting conditions should include fixture types, pole types, height, lamp type, wattage, shielding and average spacing on the street.

Ground Floor Uses: All development and redevelopment with street frontage should have ground-level space devoted to retail and commercial uses.

Development of design guidelines addressing these topics, used in combination with requirements that might be included in overlay zoning districts as discussed below, would help assure that new development and redevelopment of properties in the corridor takes place in a manner that advances community objectives.

RECOMMENDED NEAR TERM PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS + COSTS

PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	COST (approximate)	UNIT
Pedestrian-emphasis Intersection Improvements	turn lanes, cross walks, pedestrian refuges, etc.	\$50,000-\$60,000	per intersection
Traffic Signal	four corners	\$20,000	per signal
Median Treatment	locations such as downtown blocks of Franklin Boulevard or Greasy Corner @ Vance St.	\$5,000-\$20,000 (does not include landscaping)	per linear foot
Right Turn Channel	depending on size	\$5,000-\$8,000	per linear foot
Crosswalks	thermoplastic	\$8,000	per treatment

Figure 6.1

Public Investment in Infrastructure

One of the best ways to achieve the desired physical environment for the Franklin Boulevard Corridor, and also to encourage development to occur in desired locations and patterns, is to invest in public infrastructure. Each section of this Corridor Plan contains specific recommendations for improvements. Not all can be pursued at once, and priorities need to be established for consideration as resources allow. Projects are categorized below by level of effort/expenditure required that indicate whether planning, funding, and execution of a project might be accomplished immediately, or within a short, medium, or long term context. Projects are listed below without indication regarding individual project priorities or urgency of need. In addition, general cost estimates are provide in Figure 6.1 for a range of near-term public infrastructure projects.

Immediate (1-2 years):

- Develop Gateway Signage into Downtown from the East (at Broad Street) and from the West (at Trenton Street);
- Partner with the developer of the Firestone Mill property for construction of structured public parking spaces, and
- Work with the developer of the Firestone Mill property to develop an internal street network that has the same block dimensions as the surrounding Mill Village, and to

achieve single family housing along new interior streets of the development.

Short Term (2-5 years):

- Develop pedestrian improvements in the Downtown portion of Franklin Boulevard (crosswalks, planters, sidewalk improvements);
- Widen sidewalks at Franklin / Vance (Greasy Corner);
- Make intersection improvements at Franklin Boulevard and Myrtle School Road;
- Install safety intersection improvements at Oakland, Marietta, South, York, and Chester;
- Make Intersection improvements at New Hope Road, Cox Road, Franklin Commons, and Lineberger Road;
- Establish downtown trolley service;
- Create additional parking along the railroad tracks between Tremont Street and Chester Street;
- Transition all signals downtown that hang from wires to signal arms, and
- Replace light fixtures downtown with historic lighting.

Medium Term (5-10):

- Develop a shared-use trail for bicyclists and pedestrians along the railroad right-of-way

between downtown and Dixie Village from W. Main to the Webb Street School;

- Develop a shared-use trail on the south side of Franklin Boulevard;
- Develop shared-use rail spur from the riparian corridor to the intersection with Franklin Boulevard at the city boundary with Lowell;
- Develop a shared-use trail spur from a trail along the railroad between Milton and Vance Streets across Franklin Boulevard, past the Firestone Mill to connect with the proposed greenway trail running along the stream adjacent to Garrison Boulevard;
- Work and partner with the property owner of the Home Depot site to connect S. Bolding Street and Hartman Street through the Home Depot site;
- Work and partner with property owners to create civic open space within redeveloped commercial properties such as Franklin Commons and the Gaston Mall, and

Long Term (10-20 years):

- Underground utilities along the corridor, which range in cost from \$500,000 to \$3,000,000 per mile, depending upon whether new placement or a retrofit.
- Add new pedestrian-oriented signalization (e.g., pedestrian-activated, countdown displays) at Vance and Franklin Boulevard, to al-

low for greenway crossing;

- Create civic open space along Franklin Boulevard, between Oakland Street and Marietta Street;
- Create civic open space along Franklin Boulevard, between York and Chester Streets;
- Create a park (or designated, maintained open space) south of Franklin Boulevard, across from Franklin Commons, between Franklin Boulevard and wetland areas;
- Develop pedestrian connections from the Gardner Park neighborhood south of Franklin Boulevard, across a new park, to connect into Franklin Commons;
- Create an internal street network north of Franklin Boulevard to connect various parcels and reduce traffic demand at the signalized intersections along Franklin Boulevard;
- Develop a shared-use greenway trail running along riparian corridors, including a branch running north from Franklin Boulevard underneath I-85, providing a connection to undeveloped property on the north side of I-85 between Franklin Commons and Lineberger Road;
- Create a South Street Park, along the railroad track on S. South Street;
- Create a Community Art Center on Franklin Boulevard, between Clay Street and Tremont Street; and

- Establish passenger rail service on the Piedmont and Northern railroad line connecting to Charlotte.

In addition to this list of potential capital projects, there is also a need for consideration of rules and procedures that would help promote downtown activity. Those possible operational procedures include:

- Adjustments in refuse collection schedules to accommodate mixed-use development
- Creating provisions for allowing use of public right-of-way, such as sidewalk dining (but not on Franklin)
- More emphasis on grant writing to secure additional resources. Possibilities can include use of Community Development Block Grant funds, programs administered by the NC Main Street program, more aggressive advocacy of tax credit programs related to historic properties, and funding from the NC Department of Transportation and/or the NC Department of Cultural Resources for specific projects that improve the safety and character of individual development nodes along the corridor.

Working with NC DOT

As a designated reliever route for I-85 and a federal-aid highway, Franklin Boulevard (US 29/NC 74) serves multiple purposes for the local community and regional travel demand. It is the responsibility of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to ensure regional mobility along this corridor. It is also the responsibility of the City of Gastonia to ensure new development and redevelopment preserves the capacity of Franklin Boulevard for its regional purposes.

There are several ways to balance the seemingly competing demands of regional travel and the desired type and amount of redevelopment along the corridor. First of all, this master plan is attempting to guide redevelopment in a manner that reduces the demand for automobile travel and encourages use of non-auto modes by creating more compact, accessible centers that are designed at a pedestrian scale. This kind of development pattern can make transit more viable along the corridor so that headways and the span of service make it an attractive option to the auto.

But Franklin Boulevard is a state road. The City must work with the NCDOT to agree on mobility and livability strategies that serve the multiple needs of this corridor. It is recommended that the City of Gastonia and the MPO approach the state with the master plan and ask what elements the state can support or is willing to investigate further.

For those elements the state is not inclined to support, the City should ask the state for possible alternatives that may be able to achieve similar objectives.

The City and MPO should define the capital projects for which state or federal funding is sought in the Long Range Transportation Plan update and the five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Locally funded projects should also be identified in these planning and programming documents to convey complementary strategies and a sense of partnership. As opportunities arise, such as a state-funded resurfacing project or signal retiming effort, the City should approach the Department early to assess whether any of the master plan recommendations (or alternatives) can be incorporated into the project. It may be possible for the City to contribute some funding at a lower cost through such a partnership as opposed to a stand-alone treatment.

The future of the Franklin Boulevard Corridor as an effective and livable roadway that supports local and regional needs depends on all stakeholder agencies working together in a spirit of collaboration and compromise. This takes hard work and perseverance, and it should become a routine dialogue between the state and local agencies to achieve the over arching objectives for revitalization of this critical corridor.



An Approach to Capital Projects Implementation

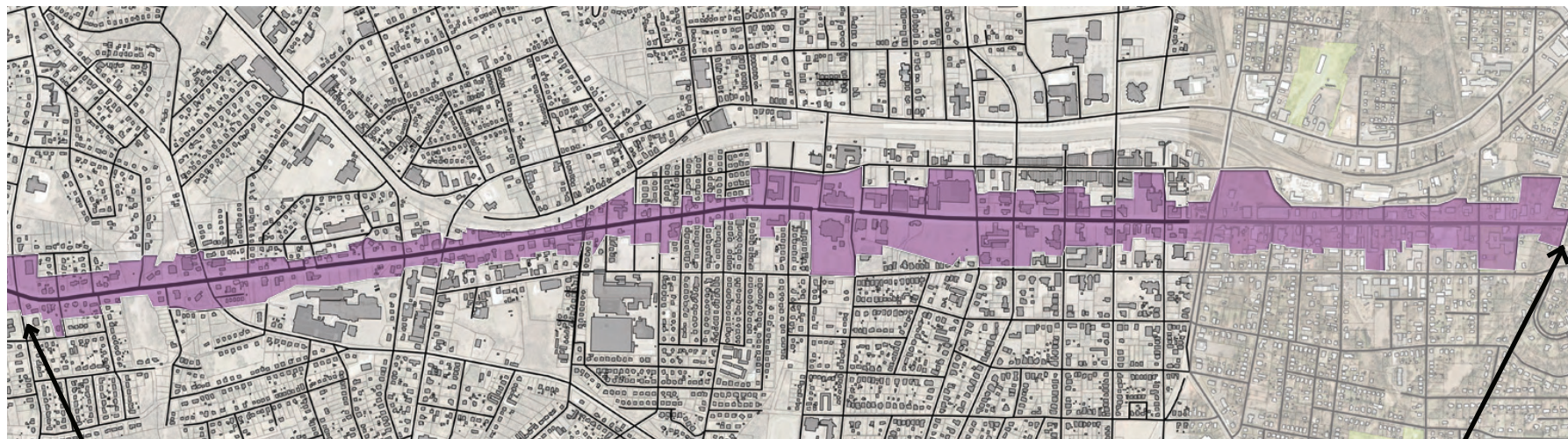
The task of undertaking the various capital projects outlined in this Corridor Plan can be mentally and financially daunting. Transforming an aging commercial corridor like Franklin Boulevard that has experienced nearly 40 years of gradual decline may seem like an overwhelming proposition. For that reason, it is imperative that the redevelopment and revitalization of this corridor occur in piecemeal, incremental fashion. It will take time and money. By focusing on certain nodes or community focal points one at a time, the city and potential partners in other agencies or the private sector can begin to shape a new image for Franklin Boulevard that will guide the corridor and community for the next 40 years.

The Corridor Plan defines specific “pulses” or nodes of development that can serve as gateways, activity centers, and hubs for existing and planned transit services. To ensure that the remake of the Franklin Boulevard corridor is manageable, the City should target its capital improvement program toward addressing the recommendations of one key node at a time. This would have the advantage of demonstrating measurable progress toward the corridor’s transformation in keeping with the master plan vision. In parallel, the City can define the specific overlay district boundaries, criteria and other regulatory strategies for other areas along Franklin Boulevard.

With market forces guiding new development on the eastern segment of the corridor and existing economic and civic destinations driving the revitalization of downtown, public efforts to improve the corridor should begin on the western segment. With relatively little private investment and continuing concerns about crime, blight and urban decline, the western portion of the corridor from Shannon-Bradley Road to Myrtle School Road needs immediate attention. The catalyst for its transformation could be the redevelopment of the Firestone Mill/Loray Village site. The City can therefore capitalize on historic preservation funding assistance, private market interest, proximity to downtown and excellent regional accessibility to use this location as a catalyst for corridor-wide change.

As the City moves into implementation of the capital/public works program for the western node, it should then define the 2nd targeted area of focus, and begin programming capital projects accordingly. The 2nd focal point should be defined based on redevelopment opportunities and/or other public investment opportunities, such as an intermodal transit center or greenway connections.

ZONING OVERLAY DISTRICT (proposed)



MYRTLE SCHOOL ROAD

BELVEDERE AVENUE

Adjust Zoning Regulations

The timing for attention to zoning amendments is good. A current initiative is underway (and nearing completion), which will result in a common set of zoning regulations to be used by all local governments in Gaston County. The Gaston Unified Development Ordinance project began in 2005 to develop a unified ordinance so that land use regulations could be substantially similar across the county. The unified ordinance is being constructed with anticipation of overlay zoning districts that might be developed by municipalities with special standards and procedures to apply to unique areas within a municipality. This sets the stage well for Gastonia to prepare overlay districts to apply to portions of this corridor.

The new draft Unified Development Ordinance currently contains two zoning districts that likely would apply to property within the Franklin Boulevard Corridor:

CBD (Central Business District): Intended to allow for commercial, office, and high-density residential development, and possibly light industrial uses.

UMU (Urban Mixed Use District): Intended to be applied to areas adjacent to central business districts and older mill villages, permitting a variety of commercial, office, and high-density residential uses.

These will be written such that the district provisions can be generally applied by all municipalities within Gaston County. Accordingly, given the general nature of these districts, there is a need for **at least two overlay districts** to apply to areas within the Franklin Boulevard Corridor in Gastonia: one to apply to the core downtown area, and one to apply to the transition areas extending east and west.

Following adoption of this Corridor Plan, work should commence on preparation of these two overlay zoning districts that would apply additional provisions, over and above base zoning requirements. The new overlays should contain customized dimensional standards, calibrated to existing conditions in which the rules would apply, addressing setbacks, height, landscaping and screening, percent of building façade that must be used for windows, requirements that overhead utility lines be relocated underground by developers of property containing or abutting such lines, requirements for public improvements such as bike lanes and sidewalks, and new sign provisions.

Possible provisions that might be included in these overlay zones are:

- Mechanism that triggers the new standards or requirements whenever new development

is proposed

- Mechanism that triggers the new standards or requirements whenever subdivision is proposed (either to create new lots, or to recombine existing lots)
- Requirements that public improvements be completed as conditions of approval
- Adjustments to the list of permitted uses to reflect desired use patterns
- Incentives for mixed use, such as higher allowable intensities and/or reduced parking requirements if residential, office, and retail uses are included in a development proposal.
- Requirements for mixed use, such as requiring that no more than a stated percentage of floor area (e.g., 50%) of a new development in a mixed-use zone can be devoted to one of the following uses: commercial, office, or residential.
- Adjustments to amount of development permitted (raise or lower Floor Area Ratios)
- Adjustments to amount of parking required (eliminate requirements, lower requirements, or offer options, such as shared parking provisions or payments in lieu of providing parking for areas served by transit)
- Placeholder for a future program that would allow the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) into zoning regulations and out of the overlay zone, as appropriate.

A good example of zoning regulations that can be applied to a downtown area to achieve the objectives articulated in this Corridor Plan is attached as an appendix.

Regarding parking requirements, it will be desirable to provide options. The regulations should contain flexibility to allow development and redevelopment to occur without needing to provide all required parking, if circumstances make that difficult. There should be provisions that allow for shared parking (if uses are counter-cyclical in peak demand characteristics), payment-in-lieu of providing parking, or waiver of parking requirements, in part or in whole, if findings can be made that the property owner has put measures in place to allow/encourage non-automobile travel. Particularly as the downtown area promotes greater availability and use of public transportation (i.e., the downtown trolley or longer term commuter-oriented regional solutions), the provision of parking should be considered within the context of a comprehensive mobility and accessibility strategy.

One additional issue that will need particular attention is the subject of nonconforming signs. Current sign regulations in Gastonia are workable and appropriate, and the new Unified Development Ordinance will likely contain additional provisions (such as requiring that all new signs be

ground signs). The problem in this corridor, however, is that there are many existing signs that do not meet current regulations nor would meet new requirements. Signs are critical in establishing the visual character of the area. The old signs create two difficulties: (a) the older, nonconforming signs detract from the visual character of the corridor; and (b) the older, nonconforming signs (many of them large) create a visibility advantage for those owners of the nonconforming signs over the owners of new developments that meet the requirements. This results in a disincentive for old sign property owners to make improvements to that property. Two potential provisions should be considered in the new overlay districts:

- A provision that requires that a nonconforming sign to meet all current requirements if any change is proposed to the sign; and
- A provision that requires a nonconforming sign to come into compliance with current regulations within five years of the date that a property owner is notified of the nonconformity.
- There is a provision in Gastonia's existing zoning that should carry over into the overlay zones, allowing designation of a Historic sign under certain prescribed circumstances, which removes the nonconforming status of the sign.

In order to make the five year amortization provision workable, the city will need to conduct a survey of existing signage to identify nonconforming signs and subsequently notify property owners of that status.

Policy Framework

One of the objectives of the Franklin Boulevard corridor study was to identify a future policy direction for the City of Gastonia to consider in its redevelopment vision for the corridor. The City is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan and plans to include a chapter or section that will focus on Franklin Boulevard. Therefore, based on the analysis, public input and feedback from staff, the planning board and the City Council, this section presents policy recommendations for the City's consideration.

CORRIDOR VISION

The vision for the Franklin Boulevard Corridor through Gastonia is to re-create a vibrant series of mixed use centers that define the corridor as a gateway to the community by promoting distinct, multi-modal destinations that provide a sense of character, history and economic opportunity for the next 50 years of Gastonia's evolution. The Franklin Boulevard Corridor will feature highly accessible, attractive and well-connected places that strengthen adjacent neighborhoods while enhancing regional mobility for people and goods.

In support of that vision, the following goals, objectives and policies will guide the corridor's redevelopment and improve personal mobility.

GOAL

Achieve a balance between regional mobility and local multimodal accessibility along Franklin Boulevard.

OBJECTIVE

The City of Gastonia and the Gaston Urban Area MPO shall work with the North Carolina Department of Transportation to develop and implement an access management and inter-parcel connectivity policy for Franklin Boulevard.

POLICIES

Develop methods to improve multimodal connectivity between parcels along Franklin Boulevard, including street connections, cross-access driveways, shared-use paths and sidewalks to help reduce vehicle miles of travel and intersection delays along the Franklin Boulevard corridor.

Work with NCDOT and other appropriate stakeholders to enhance pedestrian safety and accessibility through capital projects, signalization, signage and pavement markings at key intersections where walking and crossing Franklin Boulevard will be encouraged.

Work with the Gaston Urban Area MPO, the

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Area MPO, Charlotte Area Transit System and NCDOT to expand transit service and provide appropriate transit infrastructure at key focal points along Franklin Boulevard.

Work with Gaston County, the MPO and other stakeholders to update the master plan for greenways and pathways, with a focus on connecting parks, civic space and destinations along Franklin Boulevard.

Create a parking master plan to for the downtown and transition areas east and west of the city center to support desired redevelopment and improve multimodal accessibility.

GOAL

Provide incentives and a regulatory framework to guide redevelopment along Franklin Boulevard in a manner that promotes economic growth, enhances the quality of the pedestrian environment and improves the physical appearance of the downtown and its adjacent transition areas.

OBJECTIVE

Establish one or more overlay planning district to guide the desired urban form, scale and character of redevelopment and infill development in the downtown and transition areas, with a funding mechanism to generate revenue for needed capital improvements described in the master plan.

POLICIES

Prepare design standards for specific urban design site plan elements that provide incentives and sufficient flexibility to attract desired future investment and achieve a diversity of land uses.

Develop an ordinance to address nonconforming signage throughout the Franklin Boulevard Corridor.

Conduct a survey of existing signage along the Franklin Boulevard Corridor to identify noncon-

forming signs and subsequently notify property owners of that status and a time period to bring their signs into compliance.

Create incentives for the provision of civic and usable open space with redevelopment along the corridor.

Provide density bonus tied to attainable, live-work housing programs in key development nodes along the Franklin Boulevard Corridor, but particularly within the downtown and transition areas.

Establish an incentive or matching program for undergrounding utilities to reduce visual clutter along the corridor.

Establish a tree planting program to help "green" the Franklin Boulevard corridor.

Funding Strategy

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

Municipal governments are often limited in their financial capacity to undertake major redevelopment initiatives through their regular sources of revenue. General revenue from property taxes, permit fees, and the like are typically allocated toward a wide range of services and capital projects, all of which compete for scarce resources. Thus, most local governments undertaking significant revitalization efforts turn to grants and creative financing strategies to help leverage private sector investment. Creating public-public and public-private partnerships is typically a necessary step in raising funds for capital projects that can serve as a catalyst for additional investment toward redevelopment. Coming up with a local match for those grants and partnerships is often as big a challenge as reaching consensus on the preferred vision for redevelopment.

One possible mechanism for funding capital improvements along Franklin Boulevard is to establish a type of Community Redevelopment Agency or Urban Progress Zone, which enables a local government to target economic development incentives for a particular area. A common tool of such redevelopment districts is Tax Increment Financing (TIF). To support the recommendations of this master plan, the City of Gastonia should

investigate creating a TIF district for the downtown and transition areas immediately to the east and west. The TIF method would complement the proposed overlay zoning district and related design guidelines by providing a recurring revenue source that developers and property owners can count on as they consider making their own site improvements.

In 2004, North Carolina voters approved an amendment to the state constitution to allow TIF as a funding method for a “Development Financing District.” The new law authorized counties, cities and towns to issue “special development bonds” for public improvements that are needed for redevelopment. This form of financing has been used throughout the United States for many years.

Tax increment financing can be used for a wide variety of public projects, including street improvements, water and sewer utilities, transportation systems, parking facilities, neighborhood revitalization projects, and other public purposes. The only limitation is that the proceeds must be used for projects that enable, facilitate or benefit private development within the special district.

TIF bonds are repaid from the incremental property taxes resulting from the increased value of property within a specially designated development financing district. County residents and businesses that do not reside within the financing district are not taxed to pay debt service on the bonds; those that do reside within the district only pay their normal property taxes.

If property tax receipts from the district increase from a base established at the time the TIF bonds are issued, as a result of either a higher assessed value of property or higher tax rates, the incremental taxes will be used to make payments on the TIF bonds. Residents within a district cannot be targeted for increased taxes simply because TIF bonds are outstanding. Rather, any increase must be on a countywide or citywide basis and achieved through the normal tax assessment process.

If a county, town or city has an area that is blighted or appropriate for rehabilitation or the economic development of the community, it can create a “Development Financing District” encompassing the area. The district can vary in size, and the recommended overlay district presented elsewhere in this master plan would be sufficient. The area within the district cannot exceed five percent of the local government’s geographic area. In addition,

only 20 percent of the private development can be for retail purposes – unless the district encompasses a city’s central business district.

The City must produce a “Development Financing Plan” for the district that addresses the following:

- A description of the boundaries of the district;
- A description of the proposed development within the district, both public and private;
- The costs of the proposed public activities;
- The sources and amounts of funds to pay for the proposed public activities;
- The base valuation of the district;
- The projected incremental valuation of the district;
- The estimated duration of the district;
- A description of how the proposed development of the district, both public and private, will benefit the residents and business owners of the district in terms of jobs, affordable housing, or services;
- A description of the appropriate ameliorative activities that will be undertaken if the proposed projects have a negative impact on district residents, and
- A requirement that the owner of any new manufacturing facility included in the district will meet the minimum wage requirements.

Once the area of the special district is identified and the development plan prepared, the governmental unit must apply to the Local Government Commission (LGC) for approval of the bonds.

NEXT STEPS

This Implementation section suggests the actions that need to be taken in order to begin accomplishing the objectives that are recommended in this Corridor Plan. The next steps needed to achieve the vision articulated in this Corridor Study are:

1. Prepare zoning overlay districts to be ready to apply at the time that Gaston County's new Unified Development Ordinance is in place and ready for the City of Gastonia's consideration.
2. Prepare detailed, site-specific, Design Guidelines and encourage development/redevelopment, identify funding needs/resources for public improvements, and set priorities for public improvements.

Following community acceptance of this Corridor Study, an appropriate next step would be to schedule work sessions with the City Council to identify priorities and give direction to staff.

A final recommendation is that the City Council annually request a report from staff, each year for the next five years, regarding progress on the objectives articulated in this Plan.