

Center City



2010

Vision Plan

City of Charlotte
Mecklenburg County
Charlotte Center City Partners



Center City

2010

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*Adopted by:
Charlotte City Council
Mecklenburg County
Board of Commissioners
May 8 and 9, 2000*

Center City

2010

Vision Plan

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Overview

Center City Today *Why create* *a plan for* *Center City?*

Traditionally, cities prepare downtown master plans to create enthusiasm or to inspire civic pride. Most often, these communities are in trouble and need to spark some interest in their city's economic vitality. After a short walk around Center City, it is clear that Charlotte does not face any of these challenges.

Near the Square, places like the Library, Discovery Place, the Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts and the Mint Museum for Craft + Design host thousands of downtown visitors. Whether the end product is a skyscraper or someone's home, new construction starts are a regular event throughout Center City. Several Fortune 500 companies have located their headquarters here. Groups of citizens organize to raise money, create design and rally support to build a sports arena, an aquarium or a trolley, just to name a few.

So why create a plan for Center City? Precisely because there is so much happening. This explosion of activity holds tremendous potential. It can either catapult Charlotte to one of the world's great cities, or it can destroy it. A good, solid, visionary downtown master plan will help make the difference.

This document represents a collective effort of Charlotte residents, government staff, developers, landowners, public officials and national planning experts. Together, we have created a 2010 Vision Plan to guide Center City's future on several levels -- on a global scale, as an economic center, and as a series of neighborhoods for people to live, work, learn and visit.



Charlotte's Center City (1999)

Understanding the strengths and opportunities that generate excitement and interest in Charlotte's downtown is a necessary first step in guiding Center City's future. But what challenges are caused by rapid growth and development? How could ongoing initiatives possibly threaten Center City's potential?

Strengths

Downtown corporate presence and involvement. While other communities have watched their downtowns struggle because of "corporate flight," Charlotte's main street is the home of national corporations like Duke Energy, First Union and Bank of America. These Fortune 500 companies have created one of the country's most concentrated and powerful business districts.

The commitment of these corporations extends beyond their office doors. Projects like the renovation of Tryon Center for artists' space, the construction of Bank of America's Gateway Village and the proposed First Union Commons demonstrate the willingness of Charlotte's business community to have a permanent and measurable impact on Center City's social and civic fabric, as well as its economy.

Reemerging residential communities. In addition to its role as a commercial center, Center City is quickly becoming a popular place to live. A recent infusion of for-sale and rental housing has created a new level of confidence in the marketplace, thus paving the way for future market-rate residential development throughout Center City. Luxury condominium units are sold out before buildings are completed, demonstrating an interest in an urban living alternative and the desire to

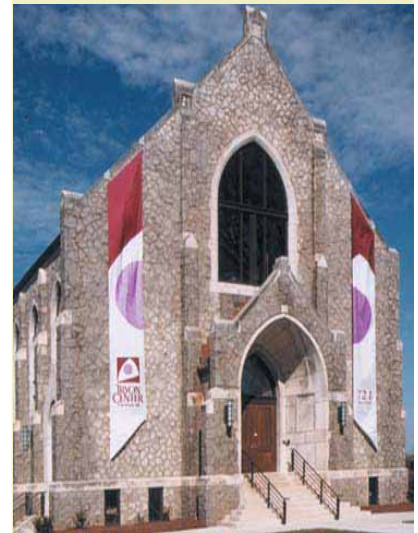


Figure 1: Renovated by Bank of America as the Tryon Center for the Visual Art, this former church building demonstrates the corporate commitment to Center City.



Figure 2: Over 160 concerned citizens participated in the first 2010 Plan Community Workshop.

live close to work. Housing in Center City is expected to increase by over 140% to total over 10,000 units by the year 2010.

Figure 3: Discovery Place is a regional attraction located in the heart of Center City. In addition to the Kelly Planetarium, this science museum features the largest movie screen in the Carolinas, the Charlotte Observer OMNIMAX.

Community interest in promoting Center City. During recent years, many Charlotteans have recommitted themselves to downtown. Local residents are actively participating in citywide discussions about transit alternatives, arena locations and the need for a downtown park. Their involvement extends beyond talking, as task forces, feasibility studies and fund-raising campaigns are created to sponsor civic-oriented development in Center City, such as the vintage trolley. Government and community-sponsored initiatives, such as the Chamber of Commerce’s Advantage Carolina, the City and County’s 2025 Transit/Land Use Plan and this 2010 Vision Plan, have recognized the importance of preparing for the downtown’s future.



Center City’s regional focus. The Piedmont region has supported Charlotte’s downtown as its core. Across the country, other communities have located sports arenas, museums and major government buildings in their suburbs and created “us versus them” competition for new facilities. Conversely, Center City has or will become the home of numerous regional, one-of-a-kind facilities. For this reason, people throughout Mecklenburg County and far beyond have a sense of ownership and belonging in Center City.

Challenges

Lack of financing opportunities to spur development.

Incentive packages to entice new development to Center City have not been formally implemented. Because the downtown's economic vitality is currently supported by private investments, the need for federal subsidies, tax relief and regulatory assistance in Center City seems unnecessary. However, without assistance programs to promote desired development, the market – and not the community's objectives – will be the sole determinant of downtown's future growth.

Tendency to use suburban patterns for urban development.

Charlotte continues to walk the line between becoming a metropolitan city and remaining a large town. Density for new construction in the First Ward is lower than expected in a typical urban condition. The New Arena Committee's initial criteria for the proposed arena site included generous park space around the building, rather than embracing nearby buildings and the downtown streets. Along Tryon, College and Church Streets, most development continues as a series of office buildings with adjacent parking structures. These patterns have tremendous potential to limit Center City's ability to become a memorable urban place.

Need for “workforce” housing downtown. While the Center City residential market grows, so do housing costs. Downtown land values have created a market that necessitates high rents and purchase prices. A vibrant downtown needs a mix of people to generate activity during an 18-hour day. Creating opportunities for a variety of housing types and a range of housing costs will contribute to a diverse and more interesting Center City.



Figure 4: An office tower with an adjacent parking garage is a suburban development model that has been duplicated often in Center City.

Center City is important because it serves as the heart of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and the Piedmont region.



Figure 5: New residential construction along Graham Street in the Fourth Ward is representative of Center City's growing housing market.

Opportunities

Strong commercial and residential markets. CB Richard Ellis' third quarter report for 1999 stated, "We see the office market in Charlotte remaining stable well into the year 2000." In addition to a strong real estate market that is fueled by the presence of large corporations, Center City's growth also benefits from construction costs below the national average. As previously stated, the downtown market for townhouse and multi-family residential development has been proven and is expected to remain strong over the next several years.

Public investments in Center City, notably transit and parks. Recently, voters overwhelmingly approved a half-cent sales tax increase to invest in the city's future transit plans. During the past three years, over \$500 million has been earmarked for open space improvements throughout the community. These initiatives demonstrate the public's recognition of and willingness to fund efforts related to quality of life issues and memorable urban design projects.

Threats

Proposed additional rail lines and trains. As Norfolk Southern and CSX consider their future needs in the City of Charlotte, the impact of rail line expansion, train station design, and an increased number of trains raise concerns. The effect of these proposed changes will be difficult to calculate until detailed plans are known. The potential severing of Wesley Heights, Third Ward, Elmwood Cemetery and Greenville will require the careful monitoring of each issue mentioned above.



Figure 6: Center City should serve as the location for proposed one-of-a-kind, large-scale developments including an arena, a baseball stadium, a downtown park and an Amtrak Station.

Common goals for large-scale development. Currently, Charlotte is experiencing a tremendous boom in development activity. Projects ranging from new residential development to construction of professional athletic facilities are under consideration in Center City. These developments should proceed with regard for one another and with the intention of sharing resources, including infrastructure and costs. A comprehensive direction for Center City's future is critical at this time. The 2010 Vision Plan is the beginning of this effort.

Why Is Center City Important?

Historically, the success of the suburbs inevitably leads to questions about the importance of the downtown. As their communities become more independent, identifiable and insular, suburban residents often contest the expenditure of both time and effort to maintain a healthy center city. It is critical that these neighborhoods understand how closely their prosperity and the city's tax base are tied to the future of the core.

Center City is important because it serves as the heart of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County and the Piedmont region. Throughout this area, the downtown provides an unusual function: it belongs to everyone, regardless of where one lives or works. Center City is a symbolic, cultural and recreational extension of each community in the region.

In his book, *Cities on the Rebound: A Vision for Urban America*, William H. Hudnut remarks, "Cities die from the inside out. They are saved the same way." The support of people throughout the Piedmont region will play a significant

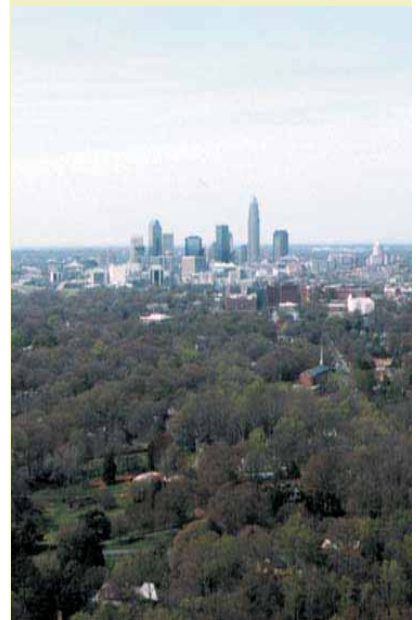


Figure 7: The connection between Charlotte's suburbs and Center City is a lifeline: each one is dependent on the other.



Figure 8: The Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts is an attraction for the Central Carolinas. Its location supports Center City's role as a regional downtown.

role in Center City's success. Municipalities throughout this area must understand how closely the downtown's future is linked to their own.

As the urban focus of the region, Center City must continue to pursue the following actions:

- **Serve as the symbolic focus of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.** The Chamber of Commerce's newly completed ten-year strategic plan, "Advantage Carolina," lists as a primary goal for the next decade the need to create an image for Charlotte. The key to the region's identity will be found in Center City.
- **Encourage centralized density that discourages decentralized sprawl and development of rural land.** Center City should provide office space and housing units as well as recreation and educational opportunities in a compact environment. Downtown development should alleviate the spread of single-level, sprawling construction into its suburbs.
- **Focus the urban density required to function as a central node for transit destinations and connections.** Every viable transit system extends from a densely populated core; Center City must provide this focus for Charlotte and beyond. As traffic congestion becomes a greater concern for the residents of the region, the interest in and demand for mass transit alternatives grow. Center City needs to serve as the heart of the region's bus and rapid transit network, offering points of service to the surrounding communities.



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- **Support unique uses and activities, such as a convention center, performing arts and sports, that serve the region.** Center City belongs to the region. Facilities constructed there do not serve just the downtown community but people throughout the central Carolinas. As the home of these resources, Center City's future should be a source of concern and interest throughout the Piedmont region.
 - **Provide a laboratory for inventing Charlotte's twenty-first century architecture.** Center City should house the region's unique facilities and represent Charlotte to the world. Therefore, its architecture has the potential to make a significant statement about the community and a considerable contribution to American architectural history. As Boston represents the late 1800s and Chicago symbolizes the early 1900s, Center City should endeavor to boast the nation's finest twenty-first century buildings.
 - **Offer urban living opportunities for Charlotte's citizens.** As the success of recent home sales in Center City illustrates, a market for urban lifestyles exists in Charlotte. Now that the community has embraced multi-family housing and mass transit as an attractive living condition, the next task is to offer a wider range of Center City rents, a variety of transit choices, an increased selection of cultural activities. Combining the single-family home opportunities of the suburbs with Center City's multi-family and loft options, Charlotte can begin to offer alternatives to residents whether they are students, laborers, professionals, families or empty-nesters.

Planning Overview



Purpose of the 2010 Plan

Preparing a plan for this city is an incredible opportunity, an exciting challenge and an enormous responsibility. Why? Because Charlotte turns big ideas into reality. Examine the city's master plans from previous decades. The number of concepts that were built or implemented is impressive.

With the amount of development interest and activity in Center City, the next ten years are critical. The decisions made about downtown today will impact many generations. A responsible and comprehensive approach to the next decade can produce an extraordinary Center City. To achieve this goal, the 2010 Vision Plan offers a moment to pause and set a determined and visionary path for the future.

2010 Planning Process

A Plan By the People... From the beginning, the 2010 Vision Plan has belonged to the people of Charlotte as a product of their needs, ideas and creativity. Three community workshops took place in 1999 and were supplemented with newspaper articles, radio interviews, cable television programs, and "man on the street" conversations. These events attempted to gather as many opinions as possible.

Research. Two studies from 1997 determined and evaluated residents' opinions on issues facing Center City: The Urban Institute's *Report on Focus Groups* and a *Survey of Charlotte Observer Readers*, conducted by KPC Research.

These documents confirmed a commitment by the people of Charlotte to create a vibrant Center City. Responses revealed a clear desire to have a city to showcase to visitors, one with high-quality design, public art and downtown shopping oppor-

Figure 9: Residents, visitors and downtown employees asked questions of the 2010 Plan's consultant team during a sidewalk workshop in the Square.



tunities. Survey participants assigned great importance to the city's dedication to downtown civic uses, such as the library and churches.

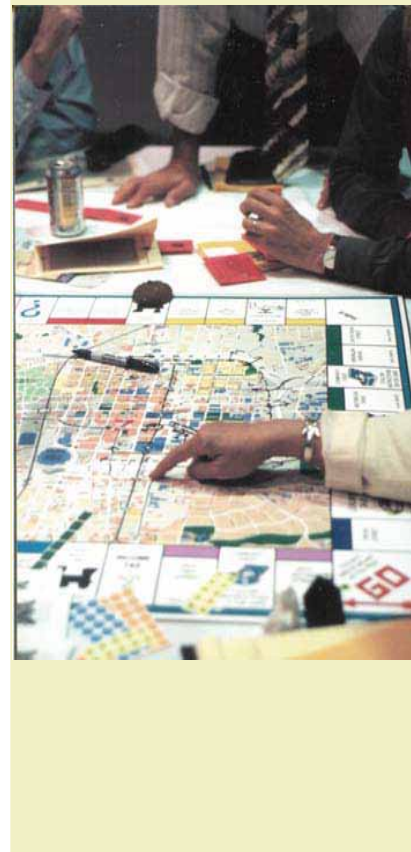
Community Workshops. The preliminary results of these two studies formed the basis for the 2010 Vision Plan's three community workshops. Over 700 participants attended public meetings between March and October 1999. At each event, community members advanced the goals of the 2010 Vision Plan by providing their opinions about Charlotte's future. Throughout the participation process, the public encouraged the consultant team to seek bold solutions and to provide a realistic blueprint for the next decade.

For the final community workshop, participants were asked to prioritize and express their willingness to commit public resources to the elements of the 2010 Vision Plan. Through their questions and suggestions, the community greatly influenced the content of this document.

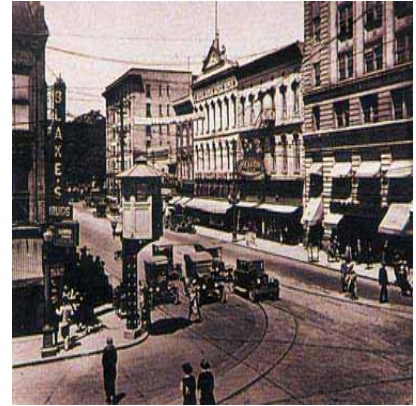
Meetings with Multi-Agency Representatives. City and County public agencies contributed practical experience and creative solutions to the 2010 Vision Plan. Numerous government staff meetings were dedicated to ensuring that new ideas could be implemented. Their advice ranged from recommending concepts and challenging policy statements to suggesting changes within their own departments to support the document's goals.

Stakeholder Guidance. Over 50 stakeholder groups, including major employers, landowners, and citizen organizations were consulted as the plan took shape. Their independent, ongoing planning efforts were evaluated and, when appropriate, incorporated into the 2010 Vision Plan.

Figures 10 and 11: During the first 2010 Vision Plan Community Workshop, citizens completed exercises around game boards to express their ideas, concerns and hopes for Center City.



The Context



A Brief Development History

Unlike most American cities, Charlotte was not founded as a port, at the intersection of railroad lines or around a traveler's stop along a cross-country road. In his book, *Sorting Out the New South City*, historian Thomas W. Hanchett observes, "During the 1870s-1920s, Charlotte transformed itself from a rural courthouse village into the trading and financial hub for America's premier textile manufacturing region." As a result of this metamorphosis, Charlotte's population grew from 4,000 people in 1870 to 40,000 in 1920.

From these early days, Trade and Tryon Streets established Charlotte's "ground zero." The city's conversion from an agrarian community to an industrial center began with the establishment of cotton mills, notably Atherton Mill. The introduction of local railroad lines throughout the Piedmont region served as a starting point for Charlotte's early twentieth-century role as a distribution center.

During the 1920s, modern highways were paved across Mecklenburg County under the state's "Good Roads Program." As new access routes increased nearby land values, farmers sold their property for subdivision and development. Suburban development in Charlotte was further accelerated by the return of GIs from World War II. The opening of Independence Boulevard in 1947 created a gateway into Center City from the suburbs.

Urban renewal programs of the 1960s and 1970s had a dramatic impact on the physical and social structure of Center City. Almost 1,500 buildings, including homes, stores, offices and civic facilities, were demolished to make way for new construction. Second Ward's Brooklyn neighborhood was demolished with few buildings remaining.

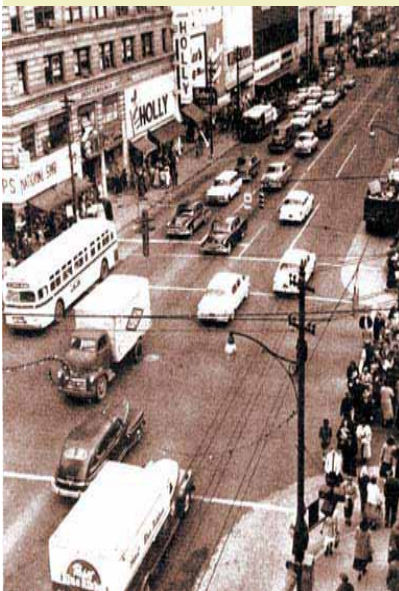


Figure 12: As depicted in this photograph from the Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan, the Square supported transit and cars along busy 1950s streets.

Figure 13: During the first quarter of the 20th century, Charlotte's downtown was the center of commercial activity in the region.



First Ward's Earle Village was built as a response to criticism that the city had erased downtown living opportunities for its lower income residents.

The perception of Center City housing started to change in the 1970s. Spared from the urban renewal practices of previous decades, the Fourth Ward provided an ideal location for rooting a solid downtown neighborhood. With single-family, historic homes organized along an urban grid, the Fourth Ward offered a quality housing alternative to suburban life.

In the 1980s, the city's population grew for two primary reasons. Corporate expansions and employee relocations focused national attention on Charlotte's positive business environment. Concurrently, families and individuals across the country became increasingly aware of the city's favorable climate, can-do spirit and affordable living opportunities. As the headquarters for five Fortune 500 companies, Charlotte became synonymous with prosperity.

A Regional Context for Charlotte. With a population of just over one-half million people, Charlotte is the largest city of the fifth largest urban region in the United States. The center of the Piedmont, Center City is the downtown for this large community. Similar to Chicago, Houston and Miami, Charlotte offers the unique activities of a metropolitan area to its regional population. The city's museums, the convention center, an NFL football stadium, and a performing arts center fulfill this role.

Charlotte clearly serves as the region's business core as well. Strongly supported by banking, the city is the second largest financial center in the nation with over \$837 billion in assets. Bank of America and First Union Corporation are among the areas' top employers, together employing approximately

Figure 14: In the 1960s, Trade Street's commercial activity continued despite urban renewal practices in other areas of the city (historic photos: Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan).



Figure 15: An employer of approximately 20,000 people, the Charlotte/Douglas International Airport is one of the city's principal gateways and major points of arrival.

Figure 16: Tryon's streetscape improvement program was a legacy of the 1980 RTKL Plan.



30,000 residents from the region. These two institutions are ranked as the nation's first and fourth largest commercial banks, respectively.

Transportation Connections...Worldwide. Charlotte's status as a major American city has been secured by its links to worldwide transportation. The small municipal facility that opened in 1935 is known today as Charlotte/Douglas International Airport. As a point of arrival for over twenty million passengers annually, the airport manages an average of 500 daily departures to over 160 cities. In addition to its role as the center of the nation's largest consolidated rail, Charlotte is home to almost 300 trucking companies, including nine of the country's top ten operations (Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 1999).

Charlotte also provides the Piedmont region's educational hub. Within the city, colleges and universities offer higher educational opportunities to over 60,000 students.

Charlotte's Planning Legacy

Charlotte has exercised progressive planning practices for forty years. Beginning with the Odell Plan in 1966, the Center City has been a laboratory for innovative design and development strategies.

1966: The Odell Plan. During the mid-1960s, Charlotte was essentially a large town. The city's population was less than half of today's total; Tryon was a bustling, retail main street; and Second Ward included a predominantly African-American community known as Brooklyn. Under the first



Figure 17: The site for Ericsson Stadium was proposed as part of the Center City Charlotte Urban Design Plan in 1990.

master plan for Center City, Odell recommended wider streets, the removal of on-street parking and a convention center. While stating a recommitment to Independence Square at the corner of Trade and Tryon, the plan also encouraged the replacement of “blighted conditions” throughout the city with high-rise apartments, government buildings and commercial facilities.

1980: The RTKL Plan. By 1980, Charlotte’s skyline was starting to reflect the success of its central business district. With RTKL’s direction, a new plan was created to encourage downtown uses that complemented the office towers, specifically residential units and cultural facilities. This document also planned for a Center City where people would live, work, learn and play. Tryon Street’s streetscape transformation was recommended in the RTKL Plan. This bold improvement project is noted today for creating one of the most pedestrian-friendly environments in Center City.

1990: The Charlotte Center City Urban Design Plan. The Charlotte Center City Urban Design Plan identified the need to provide a sense of place and security while encouraging the city to think regionally about transit. The plan confirmed a site for a football stadium and anticipated greater density in residential construction. The report also challenged the basic concept of downtown’s boundaries, suggesting an extension of the Center City beyond the 277 freeway loop.

Current Planning Efforts in Center City. As local landowners have pursued independent planning efforts for pieces of Center City, the need for a comprehensive plan has become acute. Possible development alternatives for approximately eight blocks to the east of North Tryon Street have been explored. At the other end of Center City, First Union is preparing to build an office building and “campus” along South Tryon Street. Plans to construct a courthouse have initiated comprehensive plans in the Government District by Mecklenburg County. Based on its commitment and investment in Gateway Village, Bank of America continues to demonstrate a vested interest in West Trade Street. The trolley corridor plan recognized the immediate need to connect the South End’s entertainment district, the Wilmore and Dilworth’s residential communities and Center City’s commercial core. Community excitement over this initial phase has generated interest in expanding trolley lines to additional neighborhoods.



Figure 18: Boundaries for the 2010 Vision Plan's scope of work extended beyond the I-277 Freeway Loop.

Existing Conditions

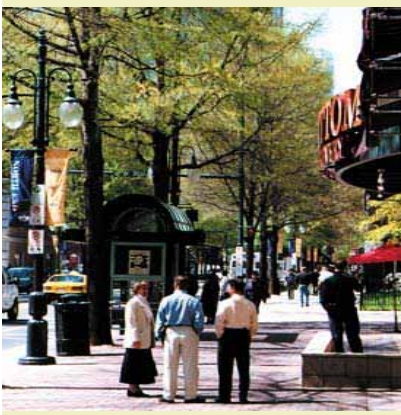
Boundary Definition

Continuing the efforts of the Charlotte Center City Urban Design Plan, the boundaries for the 2010 Vision Plan were drawn outside of the freeway loop. As downtown grows, adjacent neighborhoods will be greatly affected, and the perception of what constitutes "Center City" will change. Additionally, the approach of the five major corridors (Elizabeth Avenue, Independence Boulevard, South Boulevard, West Trade Street and North Tryon Street) will be addressed as part of this effort.

Demographics

Center City's residents reflect typical demographic characteristics of a mid-sized urban downtown. Of the nearly 6,000 people who reside in Center City, 60% are married with an average household income of \$33,432. Figures for 1999 indicate that of approximately 2,800 households, only 5% record median household incomes of over \$100,000 (CACI Marketing Services, 1999). Downtown residents tend to be white-collar professionals or clerical/service workers. Currently, Center City has few middle-income households.

Figure 19: In recent years, offices have dominated Center City's land use.



Land Use

Center City's land use patterns are evolving. The distinctions of the current model – office on Tryon Street; residential in First, Third and Fourth Wards; government buildings in Second Ward – are becoming less clear as mixed-use development occurs.

Office core. As the dominant land use, office space accounts for nearly 10 million square feet of built area in Center City (Karnes Research, *Charlotte Office Report*). Looking toward the future, an additional three million square feet are under construction or proposed. Currently,



Figure 20: Stores inside the Overstreet Mall do not encourage sidewalk activity – a necessary component of a vibrant city.

almost 60% of Charlotte’s total office space is housed in seven Center City buildings.

Tryon Street remains the primary address for new office construction, as evidenced by the size and location of the new 1.3 million square foot Three First Union building on South Tryon and the 820,000 square foot Hearst Tower on North Tryon. Urban patterns have established a skyscraper Central Business District in the middle of Center City. As space becomes scarce along Tryon Street, recent trends indicate a movement to a secondary address – Trade Street.

New office towers under construction are often 100% pre-leased. While the vacancy rate for downtown office space hovers between 3 - 6%, the need for space, especially in increments of 100,000 square feet or less, grows. Office building renovations, such as the BB&T Building and the former Montaldo’s department store, demonstrate an innovative solution to minimizing construction costs and maximizing location. The market has started to answer this demand with the conversion of warehouses in West Morehead and the South End.

Internalized retail. Center City, though lacking a focused shopping district, still has substantial retail space with developments like Founder’s Hall, which anchors the Overstreet Mall of approximately 100 stores and eating establishments. Additional concentrated shopping opportunities at Ivey’s, Latta Arcade and the Transportation Center contribute to Center City’s 237,000 square feet of total retail. Containing specialty stores and national chains as well as food and beverage establishments, most Center City retail complexes resemble suburban models with enclosed interior courtyards and few street-level locations.



Center City neighborhood retail is an emerging and largely untapped market. In support of Center City's growing residential population, Reid's Fine Foods opened a downtown gourmet grocery in 1998. But city residents desire additional, full-service grocery stores. Already high, the need for basic services – pharmacies, dry cleaners and service stations – is increasing for those who live and work downtown.

Residential development. Charlotte developers are addressing a missing piece of Charlotte's residential offerings: urban living. Several years ago, the options for a dense, yard-free, pedestrian lifestyle were greatly limited. Recent projects such as 400 North Church and ChapelWatch proved the attractiveness of this lifestyle to the Charlotte market. The explosion of new, multi-family housing units along the southern end of the trolley route provides another point of confidence in the Center City market. During 1990s, approximately 6,000 people lived in Center City. As market interest and land use policy strongly supports additional residential construction, downtown's resident population will most likely surpass 10,000 people by the year 2004.

Institutional centers. Because of its role as a regional center, downtown is the home of several large educational and government facilities. Center City and the surrounding areas offer a variety of higher educational opportunities, including Johnson C. Smith University, the University of North Carolina Charlotte, Central Piedmont Community College and Queen's College.

Culture and the arts. Charlotte has accepted its responsibility as the cultural focus of the Piedmont quite seriously. The region's unique venues, located in Center City, include the Afro-American Cultural Center, the Mint Museum of Craft +



Figure 21: Johnson C. Smith University, founded in 1867 with a population of over 1,500 students, is also the home to some of the city's remaining historic structures.

Figure 22: Housing opportunities in First Ward have resulted in waiting lists of interested residents.

Design, the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Discovery Place and Spirit Square. Based on information gathered in the community workshops, these facilities are a major reason for regular trips to Center City.

Transportation Network

Before the Odell Plan envisioned future land use for Center City, comprehensive transportation initiatives were first recommended in 1959. Today, Charlotte’s current challenges include an expanding single-occupancy vehicle commuter population, engineering and technical issues for five regional transit corridors and the potential impact of a trolley system under construction.

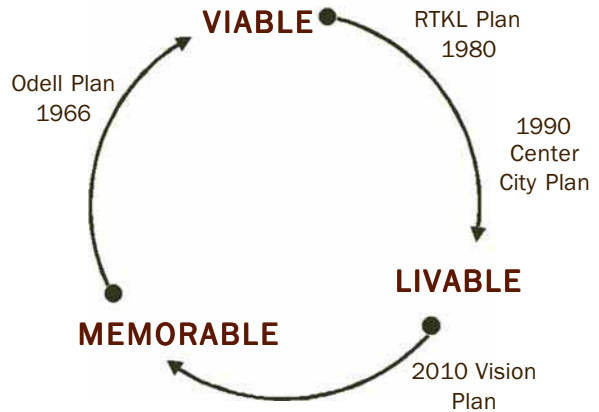
Transit. In 1995, the average commuter to Center City traveled more than 11 miles each way. According to a 1997 *Charlotte Observer* table, approximately 78% of the city’s commuters travel alone, while only two percent of commuters travel on Charlotte Transit buses and vans. The 2025 Transit/Land Use Plan recommended a series of initiatives to increase transit ridership, including the identification of possible bus and light rail corridors into Center City. Preliminary transit plans from Center City to Pineville, Davidson, Matthews, University City and the airport will be created as part of this initiative.

Pedestrian Issues. During the 1980s, the city recognized Tryon Street’s importance as the region’s main street by installing new bus shelters and streetscape elements to improve the sidewalk environment. The Charlotte Department of Transportation supplemented this effort by implementing traffic calming devices, such as coordinated traffic signals, to reduce vehicular speeds and improve pedestrian safety. As development occurs throughout Center City, Tryon Street should serve as the model for creating a “walkable” downtown.



Figure 23: The Mint Museum of Craft + Design, which opened in 1999, joins a growing number of cultural facilities on North Tryon Street.

The Vision



Producing a vision for Charlotte requires one simple task: listening. This community knows what makes its downtown great, where it could be improved, how to make it better. Arriving at a single direction for Center City’s future was not an academic pursuit. For this plan, the vision for the next decade was not developed by experts, but by the people of Charlotte.

Viable and Livable

In the community workshops, Charlotteans expressed two goals: make the Center City viable and make it livable. Because of the city’s prosperity and commitment to developing the downtown as the cultural and entertainment center of the region, Center City is already viable. As the first phase in the life cycle of a city, “viable” is achieved when a city’s permanence is established.

A “livable” city means exactly that – a city where people live. With the construction of residential buildings throughout downtown, Center City continues to become more livable. For the future, more neighborhood stores and services, open spaces, schools and a wider range of housing options will be critical in securing Center City’s livability. This process is underway – Charlotte’s downtown is becoming a great place to live.

Memorable

With these accomplishments in hand, the goal of making Center City viable and livable did not seem ambitious enough. Looking at great cities across the country, the essential element that sets San Francisco, Boston, New Orleans, and Seattle apart is how easily recognizable they are. This condition is evident in their buildings, their transit, their streets and their neighborhoods. *How could Charlotte aim to become a memorable city?*



Figure 24: Images of San Francisco: each unique, recognizable and memorable.

Figure 25: Cities transition from viable to livable to memorable throughout their “life cycles.” Charlotte’s effort to become a viable city was directed by the Odell Plan in 1966. In 1980, RTKL provided the initial path to achieving livability. The 1990 Center City Urban Design Plan further advanced the goal of a livable city. The mission of the 2010 Vision Plan is to help Charlotte become memorable.

Vision Statement

From this thought process, a vision for the 2010 Plan was formed:

*To create a livable and memorable
Center City of distinct neighborhoods
connected by unique infrastructure.*



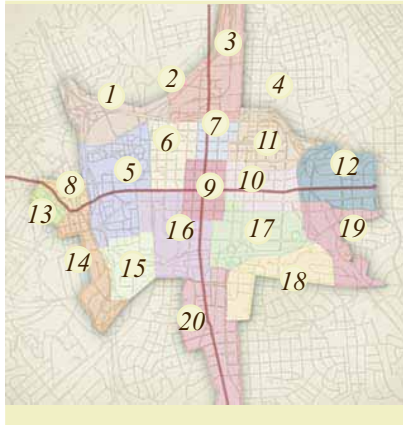


DIAGRAM: Existing and Proposed Neighborhoods

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Greenville | 11 First Ward |
| 2 Lockwood | 12 Elizabeth |
| 3 North Tryon Corridor | 13 Seversville |
| 4 Optimist Park | 14 Wesley Heights |
| 5 Third Ward | 15 West Morehead |
| 6 Fourth Ward | 16 Sports & Entertainment District |
| 7 North Tryon | 17 Second Ward |
| 8 Biddleville | 18 Dilworth |
| 9 CBD | 19 Midtown |
| 10 Government District | 20 South End |

Figure 26: Center City neighborhoods, existing and proposed.

Distinct neighborhoods. Center City is often identified as a single coherent place. By walking around Center City and speaking with people about its history, it soon becomes clear that Charlotte’s downtown is actually a series of small neighborhoods, such as Fourth Ward, the Central Business District and the Government District. New neighborhoods are emerging like a Sports and Entertainment District around Ericsson Stadium, and North Tryon around the Tryon Center for Visual Art. Identifying Center City neighborhoods and celebrating their unique characteristics created the framework for the 2010 Vision Plan. Instead of focusing on how land use, parks and transit have citywide impacts, these issues should be considered on a neighborhood scale.



Figure 27: The parks, transit and streets of Center City’s infrastructure, existing and proposed.

Unique infrastructure. One of the most interesting components of an urban area is its method for moving people around. From the trolley cars in San Francisco to the “T” in Boston, a dedication to transforming an everyday activity like commuting and making it a special event took an extra level of effort. As the community prepares to design trolley, bus and light rail systems, this commitment to atypical, beautiful and “uniquely Charlotte” infrastructure becomes an important part of the plan.

Additionally, how does a memorable city provide open space? In an urban condition, parks often take the place of front yards. In Chicago, Savannah and New York, open space and parks are functional yet unique, offering memorable experiences for residents and visitors alike. How can Charlotte create its own unique infrastructure through its parks and transit?



Figure 28: Evoking Charlotte's history of streetcar suburbs, the trolley will be a memorable addition to Center City.

Defining Memorable for Charlotte

The unique qualities that will create a memorable Charlotte cannot be imported from other cities. The inspiration for determining a “Charlotte way of doing things” can be found in the community’s history and people as well as its culture and tradition.

History. The city’s history as it relates to industry and banking offers examples of how Charlotte’s past can provide guidance for its future. Resurrecting the trolley as a mode of transportation is a memorable reference to prior decades. Also, the South End’s entertainment district clearly illustrates this point by recalling that area’s industrial prominence. Although history can play an important role in defining the city’s unique qualities, literal translation of the past, such as exact duplication of historic buildings, should not be encouraged. Instead, new buildings, parks, streets and transit should look for ways to reference the course of Charlotte’s rise, rather than replicate it.

People. Charlotteans themselves are a source for making Charlotte a unique city. Local residents place their thumbprints on their community in many ways, such as contributing to the design and character of their parks and streets. Their preferences and input will be unlike any other city’s residents. Even within the Center City, each neighborhood will have distinct points of view about their environment. Infusing community ideas into downtown projects will ensure “Charlotte-specific” results.



Figure 29: The Public Library and Discovery Place attract more than 1,000,000 people annually. The continued growth of programs at Spirit Square and the development of a Children’s Learning Center will bring even more families to the city.

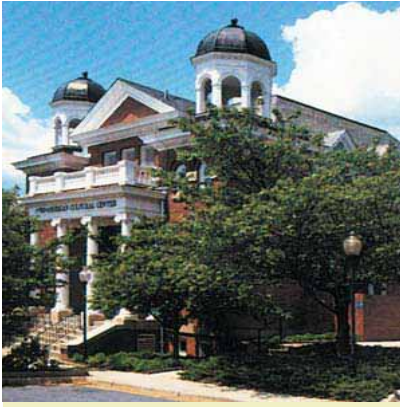


Figure 30: *The Afro-American Cultural Center captures Center City tradition with its building and its contents.*

Culture and Tradition. The culture of Charlotte presents an additional opportunity to define its memorability. One of the greatest contributors to the city’s excellent quality of life is its “small town” feel and attitude. Local residents often enjoy personal interaction with shopkeepers and people they encounter on the street. As the city continues to grow, residents look forward to more urban living and entertainment opportunities, but fear losing this sense of community. By encouraging development that focuses activity on the sidewalk and by sustaining measured growth that is agreeable to its residents, Charlotte can offer a truly unique urban experience: a city with a small-town feel.

Defining Memorable for 2010: The Guiding Principles

Although the 2010 Vision Plan includes specific recommendations to guide Charlotte through the next decade, seven general principles guide the process. To create a memorable city, each future development, program, renovation, funding initiative and city improvement should be evaluated on its success in achieving the following criteria:

Pedestrian: A Walkable City. Think of Center City as a series of walkable neighborhoods with street-level development that enhances the pedestrian experience. Create comfortable and interesting environments at the human scale.

Mixed: Development that supports working, living and leisure activities. Integrate uses and facilities to provide maximum benefit. Traditional planning practices designated separate zones for offices, homes, public facilities, stores and schools.



One of the greatest benefits of Center City's density is the ability to mix these uses throughout a neighborhood, a block or a building. The effect of this integration is a series of small communities, each functioning according to an 18-hour day – a critical component of a memorable city.

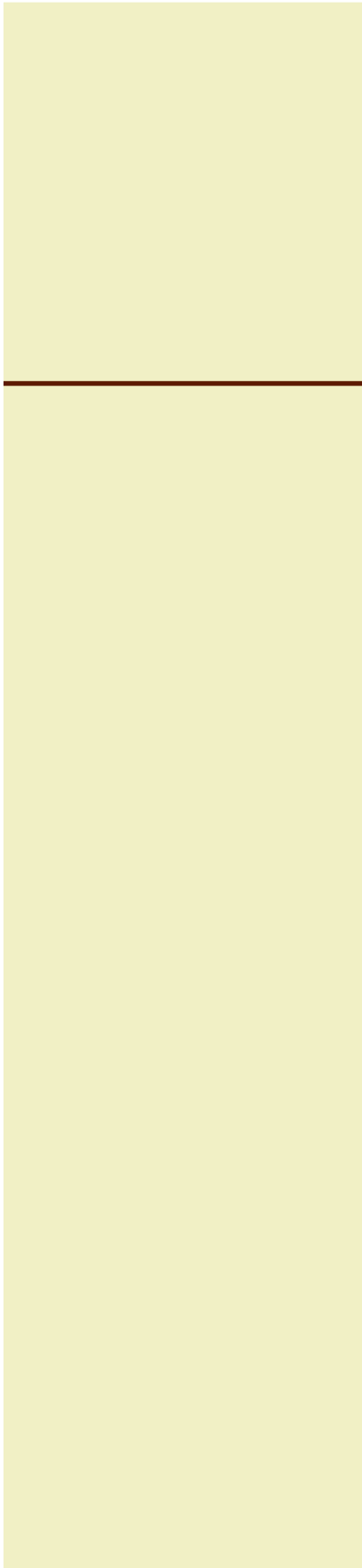
Balanced: Decisions for Center City's development should be weighed according to surrounding activity. Whether addressing new building construction, changing the street network, or designing a park, each new initiative requires a moment of stepping back and understanding the larger picture. Memorable cities grow comprehensively.

Leveraged: Optimize each private and public investment. The expenditure of every dollar in Center City should have greater benefit than to a single source. Partnerships between government, neighborhoods, developers and business are a major factor in maximizing every development project. This coordination to provide the best of each opportunity is a hallmark of a memorable city.

Varied: Offer a range of experiences to the community. Center City's growth should continue to provide a myriad of urban alternatives, such as multi-family housing, mass transit, active parks and vehicle-free living. Create a nationally recognized rapid transit and trolley system.

Designed: Discover the "architecture of the city." Few cities will undertake as many significant buildings as Charlotte during the next ten years. Charlotte and Center City should seize this opportunity. By seeking the highest quality of design in buildings, streets, parks, sidewalks, sports facilities, transit, bridges and public art, Center City should pursue a standard of architecture that would secure its place as the symbol of the new millennium.

Connected: Include neighborhoods outside of the Freeway Loop, such as Belmont, Biddleville and Dilworth, as part of Center City. Encourage a sense of connection across the freeway through enhanced transit options and pedestrian and bicycle paths as well as development that support cross-loop interaction. Connections between neighborhoods within the Freeway Loop should also be emphasized.



The Center City 2010 Vision Plan

The mission of the 2010 Vision Plan is to provide direction for future urban design and development decisions for Center City Charlotte. It would be impossible to predict all of the exciting opportunities and challenges that the community will face during the next decade. Therefore, the following sections offer a framework for evaluating choices and making judgments. Ranging from land uses and architectural design to street profiles and park development, the 2010 Vision Plan is a blueprint for creating a memorable Charlotte.

Figure 31: An artist's rendering of Center City, based on the recommendations of the 2010 Vision Plan.



Land Use, Growth and City Form

Promote the responsible growth and development of a vibrant and beautiful Center City.

Goals

Mixed

Encourage a mix of uses that maximizes land area and supports the intent of the Uptown Mixed-Use District (UMUD) ordinance.

Balanced

Identify land uses to create an appropriate ratio of residential units, office space, stores and entertainment facilities. When viewed comprehensively, Center City's land use should be varied and balanced, not uniform.

Designed

Commit to developing modern architectural solutions for mixing uses in a building or block and creating an exemplary urban aesthetic that is distinctly Charlotte.

Recommendations

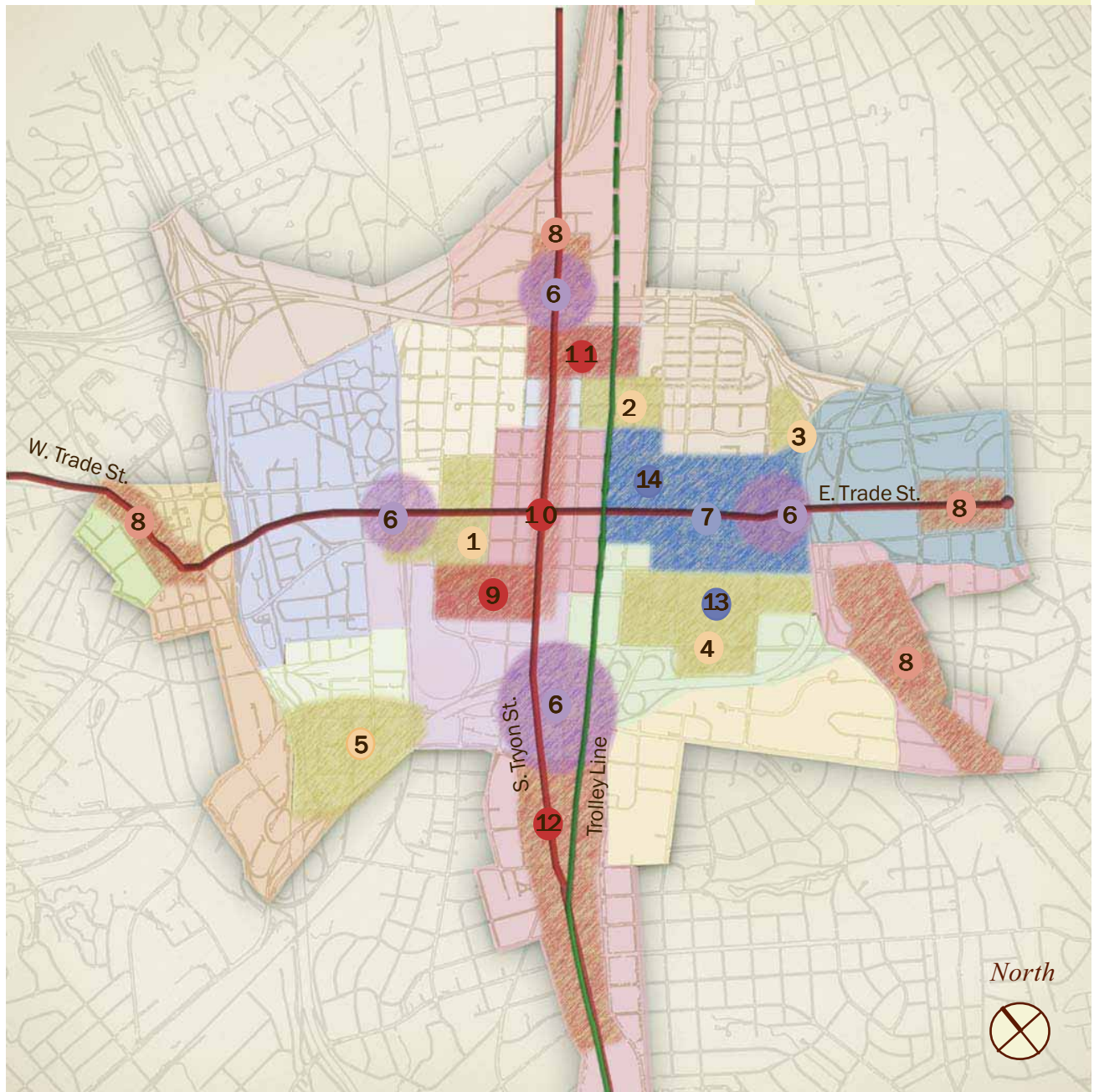
As the Piedmont's regional business hub, office buildings have dominated Center City's land use. During recent years, commercial properties have supplemented residential and institutional uses to such an extent that a vibrant and balanced Center City appears to be an attainable vision.

The growth of Center City has demonstrated the vitality of Charlotte. Managing this activity to ensure "responsible growth" has proven a challenge to local residents and government planners. Efforts to concentrate dense development in Center City and to support healthy and complementary adjacent neighborhoods will be critical during Charlotte's transition to an urban environment.

To evaluate city form, one needs to look at Charlotte from the street and not from the sky. What are the architectural elements, the sidewalk character and the landscaping that affect

DIAGRAM: Land Use, Growth and City Form Recommendations

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Multi-Family Housing | 8 Neighborhood Retail along Corridors |
| 2 First Ward Multi-Family Housing | 9 South Tryon Entertainment District |
| 3 New Multi-Family Housing | 10 CBD Street-Level Retail |
| 4 Second Ward Residential Development | 11 North Tryon Urban Village |
| 5 West Morehead Conversions: Office/Home | 12 South End Entertainment District |
| 6 Office Development at Gateways | 13 New Second Ward School |
| 7 Government District Consolidation | 14 Education Quad |



how each individual experiences the city? During the past three decades, Charlotte has lost a considerable part of its physical, social and structural history. The successful blending of these historic and modern buildings is a key to creating a memorable city.

Housing

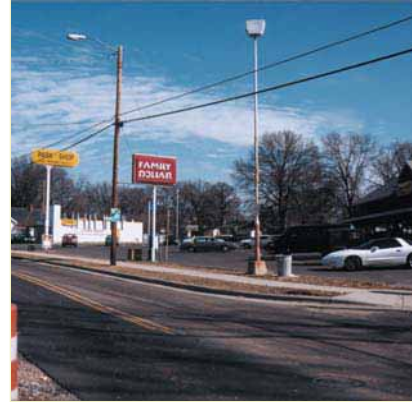
■ Offer a Range of Housing Types

One of the issues that causes great concern among Charlotteans is the availability of reasonably priced housing in Center City. Although the number of owner-occupied and rental units has boomed in recent years, the demand for luxury living has driven prohibitive rents. Most younger families, clerical staff, and students are not eligible consumers in Center City's current housing market. Seniors on fixed incomes are also excluded, as well as new teachers, police officers, social workers, and many others whose annual incomes are less than \$35,000. These demographic groups are significant contributors to vibrant city streets. Discovering methods to include them in Center City's residential community is a critical next step.

Diversity of living options. The Littlejohn Group and Karnes Research predict an addition of 6,000 residential units in Center City between now and 2010. Due to limited land availability and the desire to create an urban living environment, this figure will include a large percentage of multi-family housing. To encourage a wide variety of people in Center City, the residential market needs to offer a diversity of housing types – from townhouses to converted lofts to studio apartments. Because of the preservation of Fourth Ward and the construction of low-density units in First Ward, additional



Figure 32: The successful renovation of historic buildings into residences, such as Ivey's, has demonstrated the market for housing in the heart of downtown.



construction of detached, single-family homes is discouraged. Center City should be dense and offer an urban option to Charlotte living. “Workforce housing,” generally defined as residences affordable to teachers, clerical staff and others, must be promoted as part of this mix. Additionally, efforts to maintain, stabilize and build subsidized housing should be undertaken, as well as programs to recruit and retain small businesses in the Center City.

Housing along regional corridors. Due to rising land costs and the desire to provide housing for a range of incomes, multi-family housing is strongly recommended in the South End, Second Ward, North Tyron, and on undeveloped parcels of land in Third Ward and West Morehead. Also, the established neighborhoods immediately outside the freeway are strong residential communities. Through the construction of new homes and retail establishments along the corridors that lead to Biddleville, Seversville, Elizabeth, Dilworth and Lockwood, a range of housing opportunities can be introduced to the market while eroding the freeway’s psychological barriers.

Government land. Local government should use its ability to provide housing alternatives in Center City’s market through legislative authority, planning authority and rezoning powers. As publicly-owned land is considered for disposition, city officials are strongly encouraged to include “workforce housing” units as a requirement of developer proposals. By creating this market, particularly as a component of a mixed-use project and adjacent to transit opportunities, the local governments have an opportunity to demonstrate the success of moderately-priced, urban residential units in Charlotte to potential developers and their funding sources.

Figure 33: Existing conditions near Route 77 along West Trade Street: one of the principal entryways into Center City. This area is proposed for street-level retail and residential development.



Figure 34: Government-owned land in Center City. Please refer to table below.

Implementation Steps:

1. Promote construction of “workforce housing” on government-owned land.
2. Encourage dense, multi-family housing construction inside the freeway and along key highway corridors.
3. Support Mecklenburg County as it seeks legislative authority to ensure that implementation of publicly adopted plans and goals can be considered in addition to price when disposing of property.

TABLE: Recommended Uses for Government-Owned Land

Key	Location	Proposed Use and Density
A	Former Convention Center Site	Mixed-Use Development Office and Retail High-Rise
B	Southwest Corner of McDowell and Seventh Streets	Mixed-Use Development Residential and Neighborhood Retail Mid-Rise
C	Hal Marshall Center	Urban Village High-Rise Office on Tryon Street Street-level Retail with Professional Office or Residential Above (Mid-Rise)
D	Board of Education Building Site	Residential and Urban School
E	Marshall Park	Neighborhood Park and Residential
F	Walton Plaza Site	Freeway Loop Cap and Residential
G	First Ward Park	Residential with Street-level Retail
H	Metro School Site	Residential

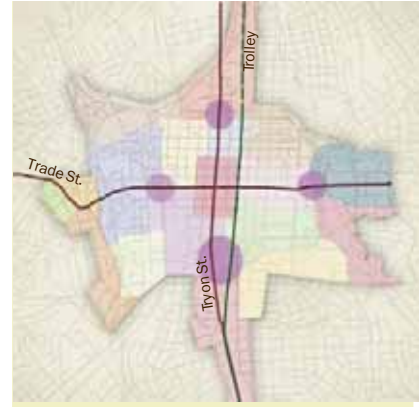


Figure 35: Office development is proposed at the gateways to Center City (pink).

Office

■ Meet Demand for Office Market

Despite massive construction efforts throughout Center City, the office vacancy rate in Center City is dangerously low. At 3.2 percent, the scarce amount of available office space reflects a conservative approach to new construction with few speculative buildings. While this direction may seem practical, small offices have trouble finding downtown locations and large offices have difficulty expanding. Caution is warranted, however. Many American cities and office building developers recall with remorse how the construction boom of the 1980s left downtowns empty.

During the past decade, most downtown office buildings have been constructed for specific occupants. Upon completion, the building is fully leased or owned outright by the tenants. For businesses that cannot afford to build their own structures, few options are offered in Center City. This situation prevents the downtown workforce from becoming a mix of professionals, which is important for a vibrant environment as well as a sturdy and wide economic base.

A Tryon Street address. Downtown office construction should be focused in the Central Business District (CBD). As available land in this area disappears, new office construction with lower building heights than the CBD should be promoted in several downtown areas. Tryon Street should remain the primary address for downtown business. Where possible, office uses should continue on North and South Tryon, as this street approaches the freeway on either end.



Figure 36: Proposed Central Business District. New office buildings are illustrated in red (2010).

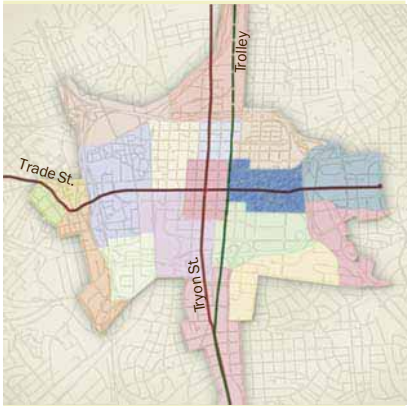


Figure 37: Boundaries for the Government District (dark blue) are recommended as Davidson, McDowell, Third and Fifth Streets.

A Trade Street address. On Trade Street, new offices should be promoted near the proposed train station to encourage commuter ridership and capitalize on the proposed West Park as a secondary address for business. Currently, East Trade Street near the freeway loop supports a solid office environment – the Government District. The continued development of downtown office space along Trade and Tryon Streets provides an excellent opportunity to focus transit operations along north-south and east-west corridors.

Consolidation of the Government District. A study is currently underway to evaluate the space needs of the city and county government offices. In an area roughly bounded by Davidson, McDowell, Third and Fifth Streets, this new neighborhood will provide an identifiable government district, creating a dense office environment and to serve as a central business district for the public sector.

Building conversions. Because current downtown office space supports large businesses that can afford higher lease rates, the need for smaller, less expensive space has created a different type of market in Center City. Rehabilitation of warehouses and residences into professional offices has occurred throughout the city, especially in West Morehead and Dilworth. Continued conversion of these spaces, along with new, mid-rise infill construction in West Morehead is strongly recommended.



Implementation Steps:

1. Create mixed-use development on the former convention center site.
2. Support Center City's urban form by concentrating high-rise office along Trade and Tryon Streets.
3. Encourage city, county and school board officials to consider government office space needs within the Government District boundaries, as identified in the 2010 Plan.
4. Research and implement local funding mechanisms to encourage the conversion of factory and warehouse space in the West Morehead area to professional office use or alternative uses, such as studio space or live/work units.

Figure 38: Existing Government District (1999).



Figure 39: Proposed consolidation of Government District. New government buildings are illustrated in blue (2010).

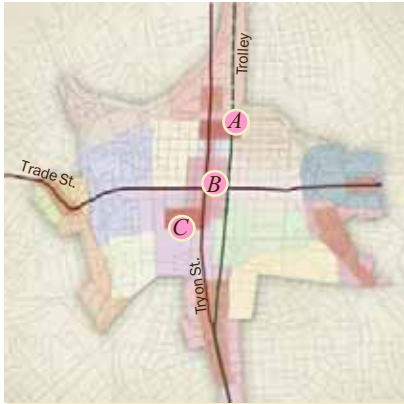


Figure 40: Destination retail opportunities in Center City, shown in red.

- A** North Tryon Urban Village
- B** Central Business District
- C** South Tryon Entertainment District



Figure 41: On a major thoroughfare in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, neighborhood retail and residential are mixed to form a vibrant street. Similar efforts are proposed for Elizabeth Avenue, North Tryon Street and West Trade Street.

Retail

■ Create Local and Regional Shopping Opportunities

The 2010 Vision Plan focuses on creating unique retail opportunities for the region within Charlotte’s downtown. The following development recommendations aim to encourage street-oriented retail while activating sidewalk environments.

Neighborhood retail. As the residential population of Center City increases, the need for neighborhood-based goods and services will also expand. Concentrations of these retailers, such as laundries, corner markets, stationery and hardware stores, should serve as “neighborhood centers” throughout downtown. Population growth throughout Center City will eventually encourage small retail stores in each neighborhood. In the next several years, three areas have been targeted as sites for main street retail initiatives. Elizabeth, West Trade Street and North Tryon Street are locations that will have an immediate need to support existing residents and encourage new ones with neighborhood stores.

Destination retail. Regional retailers will find Charlotte’s downtown as it grows. In preparation, three locations in the Center City are recommended for concentrated, destination-oriented retail development.

- **South Tryon Entertainment District.** Due to the proposed Convention Center expansion, the existing and proposed locations for sports facilities, and the current success of the South End, food and beverage establishments as well as entertainment uses are recommended along Tryon Street to the south of Second Street. This area should be the center of downtown’s evening and weekend activity. Large-scale restaurants should be interspersed



with pubs, stores and gathering spots. Where space permits, sidewalks should host café-seating and people watching opportunities. Development of this district should be promoted through financial and regulatory incentives, reduced amounts of required parking, enhanced nighttime security and district-wide marketing and programming.

- **Central Business District.** Today, most retail in Charlotte’s downtown is located within the Overstreet Mall. This facility – which includes fast food establishments, coffee shops, and boutique stores – focuses on internal walkways and atriums that do not support street activity, a critical component of vibrant urban sidewalks.

From Second to Ninth Streets, street-level retail stores should serve the needs of the CBD’s office population. Restaurants and convenience retail, such as office supply, reproduction services and newsstands, should have locations on Tryon Street. Efforts to encourage this pattern should include preventing the Overstreet Mall’s expansion, supporting the conversion of Overstreet Mall retail space to office use, and increasing retail stores and restaurants in plazas and on the ground floors of office buildings.

- **North Tryon Urban Village District.** As North Tryon Street approaches the freeway, a mixed-use urban village should be developed. Centered on a retail street, this district should offer a cinema as well as art, cultural and entertainment facilities, restaurants, specialty retail and urban service retail such as grocery, hardware and pharmacy stores. Open spaces, possibly connected to an expanded trolley line, are essential. Most importantly, this development should provide “a sense of place” to support the emerging neighborhoods around North Tryon.

Figure 42: *New street-level retail opportunities, such as Dean & DeLuca, are expanding throughout Charlotte’s downtown.*



Figure 43: Existing view of Phifer Avenue from Tryon Street, looking east (top). Proposed urban village at this location (bottom).

Implementation Steps:

1. Create a development strategy for increased small-scale, consolidated neighborhood service throughout downtown. Initial efforts should be focused along Elizabeth Avenue, West Trade Street and North Tryon Street.
2. Create a development strategy for an urban entertainment district to complement activity at the Convention Center, Ericsson Stadium and the proposed baseball stadium.
3. Coordinate policy recommendations regarding the Overstreet Mall with appropriate management to convert retail space to office use and to create a strategy for walkway removal in order to enhance ground-floor retail opportunities in the Central Business District.
4. Coordinate RFPs for the Hal Marshall Center and the adjacent city-owned land for the development of an urban village in the North Tryon neighborhood.



Education

■ An Academic Presence in Downtown

A school can provide an architectural and social focus to a neighborhood. As a gathering place for children and their parents, schools can also be a point of interaction among neighbors and provide an opportunity to create community identity.

Architecture of learning. Modeling progressive, urban schools in cities such as Pittsburgh, Boston and Minneapolis, the architecture of these facilities should inspire excitement about learning, reflect the character of their neighborhoods and maximize available land area.

Currently, the North Carolina Board of Education produces guidelines to follow for school construction. Charlotte Mecklenburg schools use educational specifications to design new schools that are in agreement with these guidelines.

Working with this state agency, local officials may determine a need to incorporate site guidelines for schools that support urban development. While these guidelines should be based on the successes of other communities throughout the country, the architectural design of schools within this area should be Charlotte's own.

Schools are catalysts. In potential neighborhoods, such as Second Ward, downtown schools will serve as a type of catalyst to encourage the first wave of new residents in this area. The need for new schools in the Center City will be

Figure 44: This multi-story, urban elementary school near Boston is an example of how city facilities must often adapt to compact development conditions.



Figure 45: Proposed Education Quad (2010) located between Trade, Sixth and Caldwell Streets and the trolley corridor.

determined, in part, by the ten-year enrollment projections for the district. The additional growth and construction of new schools will complement existing schools: Irwin Elementary, First Ward Elementary, Bruns Elementary and the Metro School. Although diagrams for the 2010 Vision Plan illustrate new buildings on the sites of the Metro School and the Board of Education, these facilities are not recommended for closing, but for evaluation and possible relocation.

A high school offering programs in vocational and technical studies is planned for the Freedom Drive area. Additional school locations might include Marshall Park, a visual and performing arts school in the North Tryon Street area, and an Education Quad along Brevard Street or next to the proposed West Park. These areas are each recommended for increased residential density and represent prominent central sites in Center City's existing urban fabric.

Higher Education. Center City's educational institutions, Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) and Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC), anchor Trade Street on either end of downtown. Along Brevard Street and north of Trade Street, an Education Quad is suggested to support the learning needs of Charlotte's residents, especially the continuing education needs of the Central Business District. Intended to



Figure 46: Additional schools in Center City need to complement existing facilities, such as Irwin Elementary School.

house public schools, higher education facilities and libraries, the Quad should incorporate underground parking in its design and include programs to encourage transit ridership.

Implementation Steps:

1. Determine public school (K-12) needs, based in part on enrollment projections, for Center City.
2. Determine the need, if applicable, for school site guidelines that complement urban development.
3. Determine the use of a co-location model, which draws upon community resources, for schools within the Center City.
4. Study the viability of an Education Quad, centered on Brevard Street along Trade Street, to house higher education and associated learning facilities.

Historic Preservation

■ Preserve Remaining Historic Character

Two characteristics that contribute to a city's richness are missing in Charlotte's downtown: history and diverse architecture. During the past three decades, Center City has lost a considerable amount of its physical, social and structural past. The demolition and removal of historic and cultural resources has compromised the city's ability to tell its own story. As the historic center of the region, Charlotte must integrate its remaining buildings and artifacts into its modern urban fabric. Recent preservation efforts, such as the relocation of Ratcliffe Florist Shop, the protection of Latta Arcade and the rehabilitation and reuse of the Tryon Center for Visual Art, indicate the beginning of this commitment. The continued blending of the past and the present is a key to creating a memorable city.



Figure 47: Few historic structures remain in Center City, in part due to approvals of demolition permits for surface parking and the difficulty of adaptive reuse.



Local and state cooperation. To protect Charlotte’s history, it is important to understand why resources have been lost and how significant existing artifacts can be sensibly maintained. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) is responsible for the identification and protection of Charlotte’s history. During the past decade, massive new construction has made these tasks daunting. The HLC should forge a working relationship with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office (NCSHPO). The first efforts of this partnership should include the revision of the Center City’s comprehensive survey of historic properties, identification of additional funding mechanisms for resource protection, and continued utilization of regulatory controls to discourage demolition.

Implementation Steps:

1. Apply for a NCSHPO survey grant to update Center City’s inventory of historic places.
2. Designate a member of the Mecklenburg-Charlotte Historic Landmarks Commission to serve as a liaison to the NCSHPO.
3. Prepare an amendment to the UMUD ordinance to disallow surface parking as a permitted primary use, to reduce the demolition of historic structures for this purpose.
4. Evaluate the impact of waiving minimum parking standards for commercial adaptive reuse of historic properties in the UMUD.
5. Heighten requirements for demonstrating financing and design intent prior to the issuance of demolition permits for properties determined “locally significant” by the HLC.



Figure 48: Ratcliffe Flower Shop building was relocated rather than demolished to protect this historic structure.

Figure 49: *The Federal Courthouse is an important historic building and has been recommended as the cornerstone of a new Center City park.*

Quality Architecture

Because Charlotte's architectural history has been eroded, it will be the responsibility of the modern buildings to define the city. In the coming years, the city will be constructing government buildings, large public facilities, schools and community parks, just to name a few. The quality of Charlotte's architecture will be measured by these structures, setting the standard for private development. Charlotte must take this opportunity to build new landmarks that will become the city's future historic buildings.

In producing the design character that will define Center City in the next century, Charlotte should be aggressive in finding an architecture that is distinctly its own. This campaign to impose the highest standard on every project in the city should impact efforts from the new courthouse building, a sports arena and schools to parks and streetscape details.



Figure 50: *The Convention Center is an example of quality design and unique architecture for Charlotte's Center City.*

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

Tie neighborhoods together through the development of Center City open spaces and their connections to regional parks.

Goals

Pedestrian

Create a system of parks, connected by green streets, to form a landscaped, shaded, and walkable experience throughout downtown.

Leveraged

Initiate new park construction in conjunction with adjacent development. Parks should not be built in isolation.

Varied

Offer a range of park experiences, based on each park's purpose, its topography, its surrounding uses and the neighborhood's needs.

Recommendations

Historically known as “the city of trees,” Charlotte is facing a critical moment in time. As construction continues at a rapid pace, the opportunity to commit land to a Center City park system fades. Open spaces touch on every aspect of the area's urban condition: its viability, livability and memorability. By providing a variety of spaces, organized to form a system, Center City's parks and open spaces should serve many purposes – a dynamic bike path, a central “heartplace” for the region, or a neighborhood oasis. In order to make the city memorable, each of these elements must be individually designed for and by its intended users, thereby reinforcing distinct neighborhood parks, an active linear park, and a memorable Center City park.

DIAGRAM: Open Space, Parks and Recreation Recommendations

- 1 Loop Linear Park
- 2 New West Park
- 3 Green Streets
- 4 New Education Quad
- 5 Reconfigured Marshall Park
- 6 New Ninth Street Greenway
- 7 Elmwood Cemetery
- 8 Fourth Ward Park
- 9 Little Sugar Creek Greenway
- 10 Wesley Heights Greenway
- 11 Trolley Corridor as a "Linear Garden"
- 12 Cap Over Route 277: Center City Park

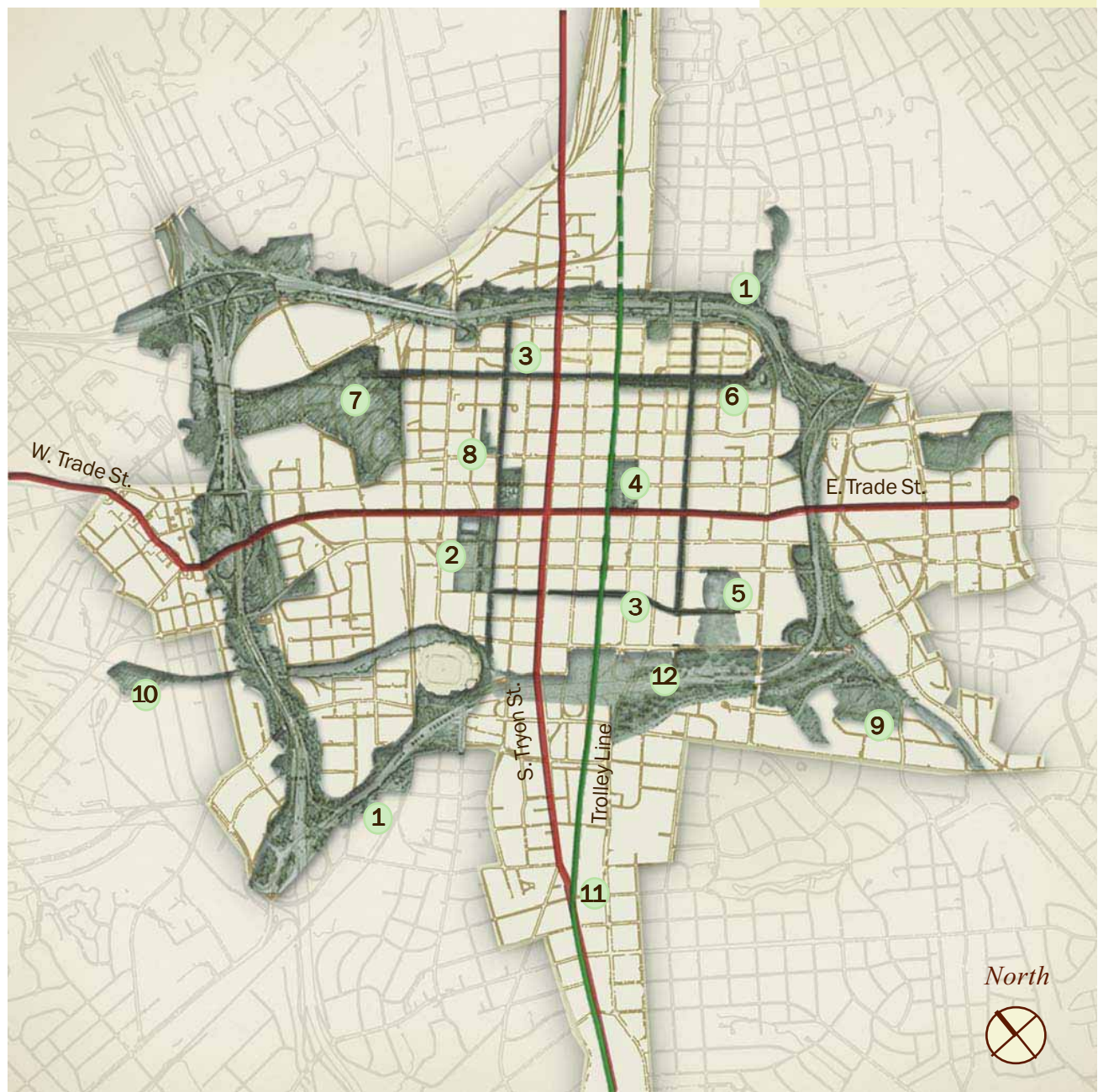




Figure 51: A linear park that encircles Center City is proposed.

■ Create a Linear Park

Cities like Boston, New York and Chicago offer an extraordinary amenity: an opportunity for active recreation. Consequently, running, walking and biking have become hallmarks of their urban lifestyle. A linear park next to the freeway is proposed as an additional benefit of Center City living, as a point of connection to surrounding parks and for commuting.

Minimize the freeway. Because of its impact as a barrier between Center City and nearby communities, the freeway is in need of reassessment. In addition to the separation caused by the highway itself, the freeway’s right-of-way results in wide spans of divisive concrete and vacant land surrounding downtown. The landscaping of these areas, similar to the efforts initiated at the highway’s right-of-way at West Trade Street, will help to alleviate these gaps.

Center City recreation. As part of a right-of-way enhancement program, the active recreational path is a sensible addition. By providing space for running and walking in a park environment, Charlotte will not only enhance the quality of life for its Center City residents and employees, but will provide a better use for currently underutilized land while also improving the visual aspects of the entrances into downtown. The topography and width of the right-of-way, as well as safety considerations, will require this path to meander from the linear park to nearby greenways and along a few blocks of city streets.

Regional connections. The linear park should serve as the core of a park system. Existing components, such as Upper Irwin Greenway, Little Sugar Creek Greenway, Wesley Heights Greenway, Greenville Park and Independence Park should not only be connected to the linear park, but should have individual trail heads along the active path.



Figure 52: With safe and attractive pathways, biking becomes a viable commuting option.

Figure 53: Existing condition of the freeway right-of-way (top). Following landscaping and the addition of an activity path (below).



Implementation Steps:

1. Conduct a feasibility study of a linear park in the freeway’s right-of-way, including an “activity path” for walking, jogging, biking and skating.
2. Continue acquisition, enhancement and design of connections to regional greenway systems.
3. Encourage development adjacent to Little Sugar Creek and Irwin Creek Greenways to ensure activity and maintain safe environments.



Figure 54: Proposed Center City Park on cap over the freeway. This open space should include civic buildings (illustrated in purple) and housing (yellow).

■ Design a Center City Park

During community workshops, local residents clearly expressed their desire for a successful Center City gathering space. Because of the configuration of Marshall Park, large crowds cannot be accommodated easily. Additionally, since empty office buildings and surface parking lots surround it during evenings and weekends, Marshall Park appears vacant and unsafe when no activities are planned. In response, citizens have rallied around the idea of central, large, regional park in Center City.



A local “heart space.” As the Linear Park will serve as the spine of a park system, the Center City Park should function as its heart. Although a variety of activities will occur in smaller parks throughout Center City and Mecklenburg County, exceptional events should take place here.

Capping the freeway. The amount of available land in Center City is diminishing while its cost continues to rise. In an effort to link the suburbs to the downtown, the construction of a bridged connection over the freeway is proposed, referred to as the Freeway Cap. Additional land area created by this structure is the appropriate location for a downtown, central and regional park.

Because of the magnitude and complexity of issues associated with the Freeway Cap’s construction, other cities with similar experience should be consulted. Portland, Duluth and Seattle have each completed cap projects during the past several years. With its bridged highway and gardens above, Duluth’s cap might provide the most direct correlation for Charlotte’s highway engineers, landscape architects and budget officials.

Implementation Steps:

1. Prepare concept plans to create a cap across Route 277.
2. Design a regional park on the freeway cap, connecting to former Marshall Park.
3. Contact cities throughout the United States, including Seattle, Portland and Duluth, that have completed similar freeway cap projects.



Figure 55: The highway cap in Duluth, Minnesota was originally constructed as a citywide park. Adjacent construction of a high-tech office complex has created a campus-like atmosphere.

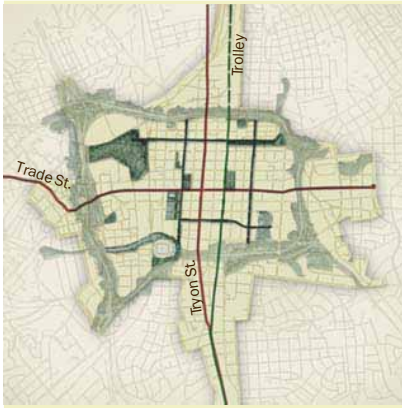


Figure 56: Neighborhood parks should be within walking distance of each Center City resident.

■ **Identify or Create a Park for Each Neighborhood**

Every resident of Center City should be within walking distance of the parks and open space system. More specifically, they should have easy access to a small park they helped design for the social, active or leisure needs of their community. These neighborhood parks should be as much a part of the residents’ lives as their own backyard.



Figure 57: The proposed West Park should be surrounded by housing and include the Federal Courthouse (2010).

West Park. Within the proposed Sports and Entertainment District, the proposed neighborhood park – known as West Park – should serve a variety of needs. This park should be developed along with new housing to provide leisure and recreation spaces. Between two and three blocks in area, West Park should be located between Ericsson Stadium and a proposed arena/train station complex. Due to its proximity to sports venues, this open space becomes the obvious location for large community celebrations and festivals. This site offers a significant opportunity to incorporate underground public parking into the park’s design, as demonstrated at Union Square in San Francisco and Post Office Square in Boston. As an additional benefit, West Park will offer a prime address for high-density residences in this underdeveloped section of Center City.

Marshall Park. Upon the reemergence of Second Ward as a place to live, Marshall Park’s current configuration will not meet this neighborhood’s needs. As a smaller scale open space within the existing Marshall Park, a new Second Ward Park and the adjacent Board of Education building will offer an ideal location for an urban school and multi-family housing. An amphitheater is proposed for this new open space to host a variety of Center City outdoor events and to support school programs.



Figure 58: As recommended for the trolley’s “linear garden,” public art projects should be located throughout Center City’s neighborhood park system.

Opportunities for art. Neighborhood parks offer ideal locations for public art. Working with local residents, the Public Art Commission should be encouraged to find opportunities for murals, sculptures and other types of art in these open spaces. A park has been identified for each Center City neighborhood, and the diversity of Charlotte could be reflected in these selections.

Trolley as a “linear garden.” Dated September 1999, “A Public Art Master Plan,” stated a vision for a series of ten small parks along the trolley line. Collectively forming a “linear garden,” these open spaces would differ between neighborhoods, according to public input. As part of the 2010 Vision Plan, the trolley line should serve as a principal thread of the Center City parks and open space system.

Implementation Steps:

1. Assist Federal Courts’ relocation efforts and acquire between two to four blocks for West Park in the Sports and Entertainment District.
2. Assist Board of Education relocation efforts and reconfigure Marshall Park into a smaller, neighborhood Second Ward Park with adjacent multi-family housing.
3. For existing neighborhoods, continue to seek public input on improvements to and programming of neighborhood parks.
4. As new neighborhoods grow, conduct public workshops for planned open space.

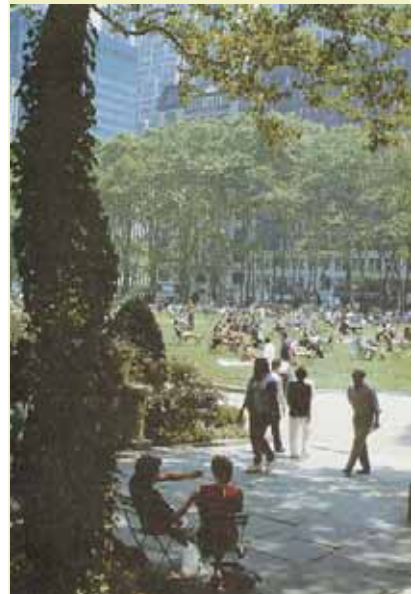


Figure 59: Bryant Park in midtown Manhattan provides an active and passive neighborhood park for this densely populated area of the city.

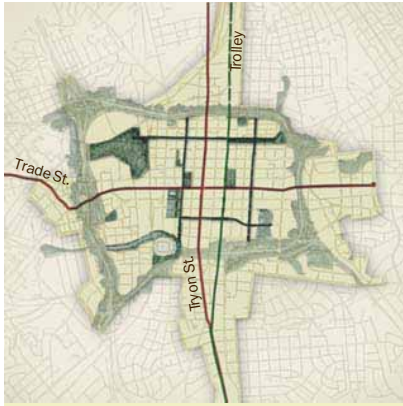


Figure 60: Green streets provide connections for the Center City park system.



■ Designate a System of Green Streets

Although each of these independent elements will enhance the quality of life for Center City's residents, a method of connection is necessary to create a parks and open space system. Green streets, which will provide two-lanes for vehicular travel and wide landscaped zones on either side, offer these links. Second, Ninth, Poplar and Davidson Streets are recommended for this purpose. Conceived as "urban parkways," the green streets will include a path for biking, running or skating adjacent to the sidewalks to encourage travel to all points of the park system.

Green streets are further discussed on page 68 in the Transportation, Streets and Parking section.



Figure 61: Before and after image of Second Street's conversion to a "green street."

Transportation, Streets and Parking

Provide a balanced network that accommodates the needs of a major, modern city and contributes to the urban form and lasting image of Center City.

Goals

Balanced

Provide a system of transportation modes and services that offers alternatives to commuters. Congestion, parking, air quality, mobility, growth accommodation and other issues must be addressed.

Varied

Offer a multi-modal approach to Center City's transit options.

Designed

Modern architectural and urban design solutions should be developed to maximize the livability, beauty, and distinctiveness of each transportation element.

Recommendations

As the largest employment center and heart of the region, Center City serves as the focal point of the regional transportation system. Transit, freeways, and major thoroughfares converge on the Center City area to accommodate the needs of 60,000 workers, 6,000 residents and numerous visitors. Internal Center City streets and parking facilities must serve dual purposes: accommodating mobility requirements and serving as a major expression of Center City's character.

Critical elements of the 2010 Vision Plan are the provision, management, and appearance of transportation facilities to accommodate the needs of a dynamic downtown and to support the land use recommendations that will produce a memorable Center City. This document's recommendations to increase density will benefit the transit system by reinforcing the region's hub. However, increased traffic congestion and air quality challenges are also likely outcomes. Solving these transportation issues should not compromise the 2010 Vision Plan's growth and memorability objectives.

DIAGRAM: Transportation, Streets and Parking Recommendations

- 1 One-Way Workhorse Streets
- 2 Green Streets
- 3 Trolley Line
- 4 East-West Transit Corridor Zone
- 5 Proposed Amtrak Station
- 6 Transportation Center Expansion
- 7 Pedestrian Core
- 8 Existing Rail Lines

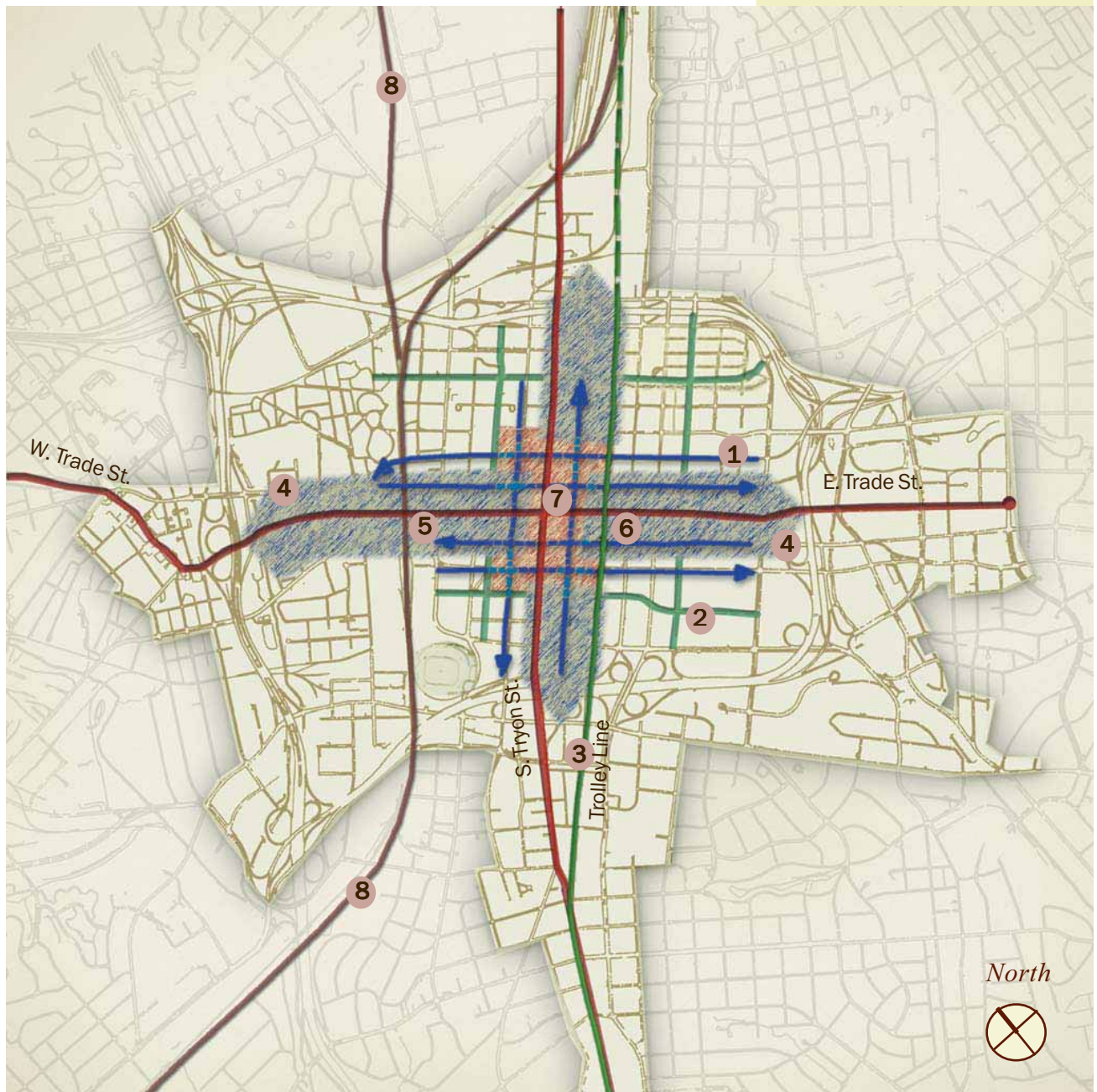




Figure 62: Bikeways (orange), green streets (green), future commuter rail (brown) and the trolley will offer several alternatives to travel along Center City's roadways.

Transit

Traditionally, transit is oriented to the massive task of serving weekday commuters to major employment centers. The 28 local routes and 12 express transit routes that converge in Center City acknowledge this emphasis. Implementation of the countywide 2025 Transit/Land-Use Plan and passage of the transit tax in 1998 allowed residents to envision a Center City that is less dependent on the automobile. As the regional system incorporates future rapid transit, additional bus lines, improved shuttle operations, and the trolley, Center City should provide substantial alternatives to the single-occupant automobile.

Charlotte is currently developing a trolley system that will be a first step in linking the Wilmore and South End neighborhoods outside the I-277 freeway to the Central Business District. The trolley corridor is already becoming a major development spine into Center City. Consisting of entertainment, business and residential components, the corridor is expected to serve as an attraction as well as a catalyst to future economic development.

A vision for expanding and looping the route has been a topic of The Chamber's Advantage Carolina's discussions. As tourism and the residential base continue to grow in Center City, the potential for increasing the trolley route also expands. It is envisioned that the success of the trolley will inspire additional connections to areas within the urban core and ultimately to surrounding neighborhoods.



Figure 63: Seattle’s multi-modal transit system features trolley service.

A loop system, possibly along Center City’s green streets, could integrate many of the cultural and entertainment venues with nearby hotels and residences. Beyond this area, opportunities abound for future routes to North Charlotte, Elizabeth, East Boulevard and Five Points.

The trolley must tie into the surrounding developments. The scale of the adjacent buildings, the configuration of the stops and connections to pedestrian-oriented facilities should be a standard component of any expansion plans. Creating trolley connections between catalyst projects should also be a goal.

Charlotte understands its need for an expanded transit system. There is a limited gateway capacity for vehicles entering Center City. Increasing the number of occupants of each vehicle that enters, whether it is an automobile or transit vehicle, is necessary to accommodate Center City growth and development. Transit improvements and ride share encouragement are the two key methods to address the mobility of people and provide time-competitive alternatives.

New rail or bus rapid transit services add significant passenger capacity over and above the road network. Transit is a major tool because of the emissions generated by each vehicle. One bus removes 40 automobiles from the streets. One train may remove 200 vehicles. Although these shifts do not come easily because of the convenience of the single occupant vehicle, transportation policy must continue to support aggressive transit initiatives.



Figure 64: The downtown’s north-south transit corridor is already established along Tryon Street and the trolley. Between Fourth and Sixth Streets, the east-west corridor will be created.

■ Provide a Viable Transit Alternative to Vehicles

The 2025 Transit/Land-Use Plan provided preliminary plans for regional transitways and projected future modes of travel for Mecklenburg County and beyond. Because of the massive scope of the initiative, connections for regional bus routes and rapid transit lines as they enter Center City were not specifically addressed. The continued development of a transit plan for Center City needs to provide the best possible integration of the 2025 Plan components into the Center City. Considerations should include customer convenience, land use, urban design, and operational efficiency.

Creation of bikeways and better pedestrian environments is also critical. Once conditions are improved for biking and walking, Center City employers, schools and entertainment venues should encourage individuals who use these facilities for commuting. The combination of improvements to and creation of bicycle and pedestrian facilities points the way toward an outstanding alternative commuter system that can contribute in a significant way to congestion relief, air quality improvements, and a memorable urban environment.

Implementation Steps:

1. Extend the efforts of the 2025 Transit/Land Use Plan into Center City, developing the technical component of creating one or more hubs for the five transit corridors.
2. Study the future expansion of the trolley line to suburbs to the north, west and east as well as the possibility of a Center City loop as downtown population density reaches appropriate levels.
3. Improve opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle commuting.



Figure 65: The Center City Circuit currently offers four shuttle routes throughout downtown.

■ Increase Transit Ridership

As the transit system offers increased opportunities for travel, local government should partner with private interests to encourage use of the buses and rapid transit. Currently, several Center City businesses participate in a subsidized transit pass program. Methods to inspire those employers who do not offer this benefit should be investigated.

Implementation Steps:

1. Aggressively pursue increased employer participation in the transit subsidy program.
2. Study transit ridership programs of other cities, and adapt for Charlotte's needs.
3. Reassign Center City Circuit (a free downtown shuttle service) operations from Charlotte Center City Partners to the Charlotte Transit Department.



Figure 66: Portland's transit operations offer efficient and interesting transfer points between buses and light rail service.



Figure 67: Additions to Center City's transit system must efficiently connect to the Transportation Center.

■ Establish Efficient Points of Transfer

A well-designed transit network makes it possible to travel to many places without a car. The further expansion of Charlotte's system requires that Center City's transfer facilities and operations be easy to understand and supported with private development, as currently demonstrated at the Transportation Center.

Implementation Steps:

1. Continue to research pricing programs and operations of multi-modal transit to determine efficient systems.
2. Study the connection between the proposed Amtrak Station and the Transportation Center to facilitate transfer between modes of transit.

■ Study Alternatives for An East-West Transit Corridor

High capacity transit systems need to pick up and deliver passengers efficiently. One extreme is delivering people to one central location. Because business commuters dominate peak hour travel to Center City, providing several points of access near Trade and Tryon Streets is critical. An east-west transit corridor is recommended to supplement the operations of the existing Transportation Center.

The creation of a "transit street" with numerous stops is intended to deliver riders along a major arterial, while allowing vehicular and service traffic. Although this transit street would serve a functional purpose, its design and character is a critical issue. Any efforts that fail to elevate an east-west corridor to a memorable transit and pedestrian experience will neither serve the passengers well nor be accepted by the Center City community.

Design of a transit street. The general configuration of a transit street is shown in Figure 68. Desirable characteristics include shaded/protected waiting areas, excellent transit information and way finding, sufficient waiting areas for passengers without blocking, memorable but high quality streetscape elements, easy guidance for non-transit vehicles that may be allowed to use the street, and meticulous maintenance.

Implementation Steps:

1. Study the development and technical implications of creating an East-West Transit Corridor within a zone bounded by Fourth and Sixth Streets, with continued vehicular operations.
2. Issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a design team, led by a transportation planning firm and urban design partnership, to prepare concept designs for the preferred street configuration.

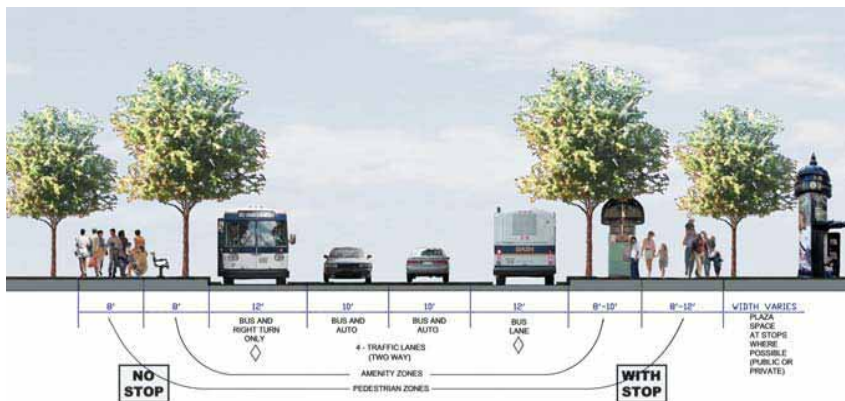


Figure 68: Recommended profile for a single street East-West Corridor through Center City.



Figure 69: Proposed urban design and redevelopment initiatives for a transit corridor (existing and proposed).

Streets

Center City’s street system has evolved to accommodate changes in office density, residential development and access outside of the freeway. As the character of the downtown continues to change, the streets should also be reevaluated. For the purposes of the 2010 Vision Plan implementation, the streets need to be studied individually and as a system to accommodate land use, transit and streetscape improvements. These efforts must be functional and memorable.



Within Center City, there are notable variations in the character and purpose of streets. Narrow and closed streets have been maintained within the Fourth Ward to preserve and reinforce the historic and residential character of the neighborhood. Other streets are connected to freeway ramps or major arterials to neighboring areas. These have fixed, designated vehicular traffic moving responsibilities. The goals of the 2010 Vision Plan include the recognition of a hierarchy of streets that varies from traffic carrying “workhorse” streets to pedestrian-friendly “green” streets. Regardless of their category, each of Center City’s streets should support a comfortable and impressive walking environment.

■ Designate One-Way “Workhorse” Streets

Because of its role as a regional central business district, Center City must be accessible to the commuter. Understanding that the private automobile will be a major component of travel to work, the downtown system should maintain paired, one-way streets to accommodate roadway capacity requirements and driveway access during peak hours. Although it is critical that these streets deliver traffic to the Central Business District, they should not facilitate trips across Center City (please refer below to the discussion on the Pedestrian Core).

Purpose of workhorse streets. Workhorse streets emphasize high capacity from the freeway loop to the core. The following eight streets have been designated as the four workhorse pairs: College and Church Streets; Brevard and Caldwell Streets; Third and Fourth Streets; and Fifth and Sixth Streets. Although the importance of vehicular movement is stressed, a pleasant and safe pedestrian environment is essential to create comfortable paths from home and parking to office and other destinations.

Figure 70: Center City’s workhorse streets (blue) will provide efficient vehicular access to the core.

Figure 71: Diagram sections of two-, three-, and four-lane workhorse street as they approach Center City's pedestrian core.

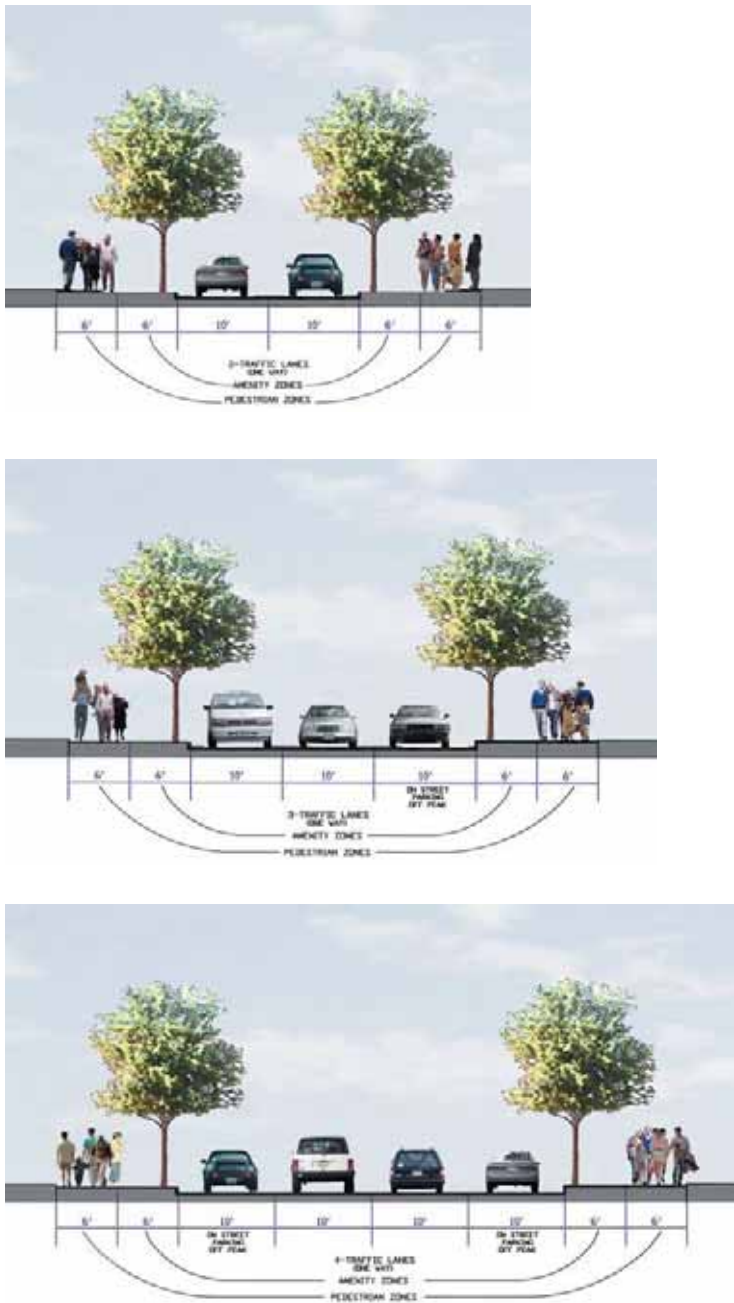




Figure 72: Proposed urban design considerations for workhorse streets, as illustrated for College Street (existing: top; proposed: bottom).



Implementation Steps:

1. Perform a comprehensive study of Center City streets and develop a long-range master plan to serve land use recommendations, air quality requirements and other goals.
2. Designate and develop technical sections and standards for workhorse streets.
3. Design improvements along workhorse streets, such as the planting of mature trees. Study the placement of public art in the center of selected intersections.



Figure 73: Ninth, Davidson, Second and Poplar Streets are proposed as “green streets.”



Figure 74: Center City’s green streets should be “urban parkways.”

■ Designate a Network of “Green Streets”

A series of green streets are intended to connect neighborhoods and parks throughout Center City. Designed with narrow, two-way, local traffic only lanes, this road section includes wide, park-like sidewalks for pedestrians and leisure activity while still permitting limited vehicular access. Next to the sidewalk, but removed from the street, a bikeway encourages recreational travel. Ninth, Davidson, Second and Poplar Streets are recommended for conversion to green streets.

By extending the park system into the street network, Center City will create a new urban planning concept that can serve as a model for cities across the country. Green streets will constrain vehicular speed and capacity, resulting in traffic calming. Wide, park-like sidewalks and mature trees create a pedestrian environment with vehicular access. Distinctive entry features are recommended to reinforce the traffic limitations and signal to everyone that an interesting street lies ahead.

It is important to consider the future potential of green streets to accommodate a trolley circulator. With few established residential neighborhoods in downtown, the Center City Circuit shuttles can provide flexible travel routes. Center City’s growing population will allow the exploration of a more permanent option for transit throughout downtown. The design of the green streets should include the flexibility to add a trolley circulator in the future.

Implementation Steps:

1. Designate and develop technical sections and standards for green streets.
2. Consider the design of green streets to accommodate a future trolley circulator.

■ Promote a Pedestrian Core

The life and character of a bustling Central Business District are best experienced on foot. Although improvements on Tryon Street have encouraged these activities, surrounding blocks remain pedestrian unfriendly. An area bounded by Seventh Street, Poplar Street, Second Street and the Trolley Corridor contains Center City's pedestrian core.

Within this zone, traffic calming devices such as slower speed limits and signal timing adjustments should slow cars and protect sidewalk activity. The Charlotte Department of Transportation has evaluated several of the calming devices and should consider implementing the most effective and publicly acceptable. While keeping streets open to vehicular travel, distinctive streetscape elements, landscaping, and public art should be introduced throughout this neighborhood to emphasize the pedestrian ambiance. The successful elements of Tryon Street should be updated and applied throughout the core

Implementation Steps:

1. Study and prepare a design and operations plan for the implementation of traffic calming devices through the 24-block pedestrian core.
2. Create a streetscape improvement plan for each block of the pedestrian core to the standard of Tryon Street's sidewalks.



Figure 75: Streetscape improvements to the sidewalks throughout Bethesda, Maryland's downtown created a vibrant and comfortable pedestrian experience.



Figure 76: State Street in Chicago is a successful transit street, from design and operational perspectives.

■ Designate Tryon Street for Express Bus Service

Routing of express buses to use the existing curb lanes (parking lanes during non-peak periods) would further distribute opportunities for transit destinations and capitalize on the outstanding, existing streetscape improvements on Tryon Street. Express buses generally operate only during peak times and would not interfere with the use and character of the street throughout the midday, evenings, and weekends.

The Tryon Street experience. The public investment in Tryon Street’s sidewalk character was money well spent. Visitors and residents alike comment on the memorable nature of this regional main street. Because many of the improvements, such as shelters and information kiosks, were originally intended to support transit service, peak hour conversion of Tryon Street’s on-street parking lanes to express bus and “right-turn only” operations is recommended.

Implementation Step:

1. Prepare an operations plan to permit express buses in Tryon Street’s curb lanes during peak hours.

Parking

There are approximately 45,000 parking spaces in Center City. Walking along Third or Poplar Streets, the visual impact of a “sea of parking” is startling and serves as one of the greatest obstacles to Charlotte becoming a memorable city. Until the transit system is expanded including better opportunities for biking and walking, Center City will continue to need a considerable amount of parking. In the interim, public and private attention should focus on sharing parking, designing facilities with regard for aesthetics and pedestrians as well as air quality



standards. At the same time policies and plans should be put in place to minimize the future need for spaces.

Within Center City, a limited amount of space for parking remains. Recent development projects have been able to provide parking at suburban ratios because of the amount of available land. As Center City approaches “build out,” parking must be viewed as a finite resource. Efforts to best utilize this valuable commodity must continue and be expanded immediately.

Figure 77: In Winter Park, Florida, on-street parking creates a safe barrier between the pedestrian and traffic.



Figure 78: Aerial view of Center City surface parking (1999).



Figure 79: Center City has pursued innovative parking structure design, such as Seventh Street Station.

■ Propose Parking Maximums for New Center City Development

Methods for alleviating the need for and number of parking spaces in Center City must be determined. In addition to encouraging increased transit ridership, local ordinances should be reevaluated to discourage construction of significant, additional parking garages in an unregulated manner. New developers should also be encouraged to use spaces in the existing parking inventory.

Create alternatives to parking construction. Throughout the state of California, cities have adopted a series of initiatives to encourage the consolidation and reduction of parking. According to an article in *Access* magazine (Fall 1999), the community of Palo Alto offers a choice to developers: build parking spaces, or pay an impact fee less than the cost of construction. In offsetting the cost of structured parking, the city has the opportunity to design and build its own garages, encourage shared parking among projects, and offer financial incentives to developers. Similar programs are in place across the country and should be a point of investigation for Center City.

Implementation Steps:

1. Determine the parking capacity in Center City, based on space requirements, land use and air quality standards, to propose maximum parking ratios.
2. Study the impact of and prepare an amendment to strike parking minimums from the UMUD ordinance.
3. Consider implementation of a parking impact fee or similar program to ensure shared parking and/or to minimize construction of additional parking facilities in Center City.



Figure 80: Zones with proposed complementary uses for shared parking.

■ Propose Zones for Shared Parking Opportunities

Four areas of Center City have been identified for major shared parking strategies. By combining complementary uses, the same parking spaces can be utilized at different times of the day. As a result, fewer total spaces are required. A specific strategy should be designed to meet the needs of the facilities in each zone.

- A Government District/CPCC zone.** Along East Trade Street, efforts to consolidate the parking construction initiatives of institutional facilities, principally the Government District and Central Piedmont Community College could lead to the sharing of one or more parking facilities by workers and students during the day and night class and meeting attendees in the evening.
- B Urban Village/North Tryon zone.** Along North Tryon Street, a new “Urban Village” concept with office, residential and retail development could share parking spaces with nearby offices and the Tryon Center for Visual Art.
- C West Park/Arena/Amtrak Station zone.** Underground parking below the proposed West Park and other nearby garages could accommodate Arena and Amtrak Station needs at West Trade Street at night and nearby office requirements during the day.
- D Baseball Stadium/Ericsson Stadium/South Tryon zone.** Office buildings along South Tryon Street already allow stadium parking during game days. This partnership should be formalized and extended to new sporting venues and entertainment facilities as well as Convention Center events.

Implementation Steps:

1. Encourage cooperation between CPCC, City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County to consolidate parking needs.
2. Encourage development of shared parking facilities for Tryon Center, an urban village, and North Tryon Street’s office and residential development.
3. Encourage development of shared parking facilities for the proposed arena, Amtrak Station, West Park and office development along West Trade Street.
4. Encourage consolidation of the parking needs between the proposed baseball stadium, Convention Center, Ericsson Stadium, the South End and South Tyron Street’s development.

Catalyst Projects

Establish Center City as the center of the region and the focus of unique activity and opportunity.

Goals

Mixed

Look to combine catalyst projects that complement one another in terms of activity times as well as parking and utility needs.

Leveraged

Use the opportunities created by each catalyst project to generate the maximum public benefit through adjoining development.

Designed

Build unique, world-class, award-winning facilities that symbolize the City of Charlotte and the Piedmont Region.

Recommendations

Today, Charlotte stands poised at the crossroads of what kind of city it could be and what kind of city it should be. The investment in catalyst projects, whether public or private, needs to be undertaken to support Center City's viability within the region. For this reason, these projects can take many forms: new schools, residential construction or a trolley line as well as more traditional catalysts such as sports facilities and tourist attractions.

In this section, two forms of catalyst projects are identified. "Functional catalyst projects" represent the community's goal to break down the physical or psychological barriers created by the freeway. This objective can be accomplished through the development of residential buildings, neighborhood stores and transit facilities as well as visual improvements to the overpasses such as public art projects and creation of a linear park next to the highway.

DIAGRAM: Catalyst Projects Recommendations

- 1 *Redevelopment/Connection Initiatives*
- 2 *Trolley as a Connector*
- 3 *Greenway Connections*
- 4 *Cross-Loop Pedestrian Improvements*
- 5 *Corridor Redevelopment*
- 6 *Proposed Arena/Amtrak/Office Complex*
- 7 *Proposed Baseball Stadium*
- 8 *North Tryon Urban Village*
- 9 *South Tryon Entertainment Village*
- 10 *Education Quad*
- 11 *Cap Over Route 277: Center City Park*

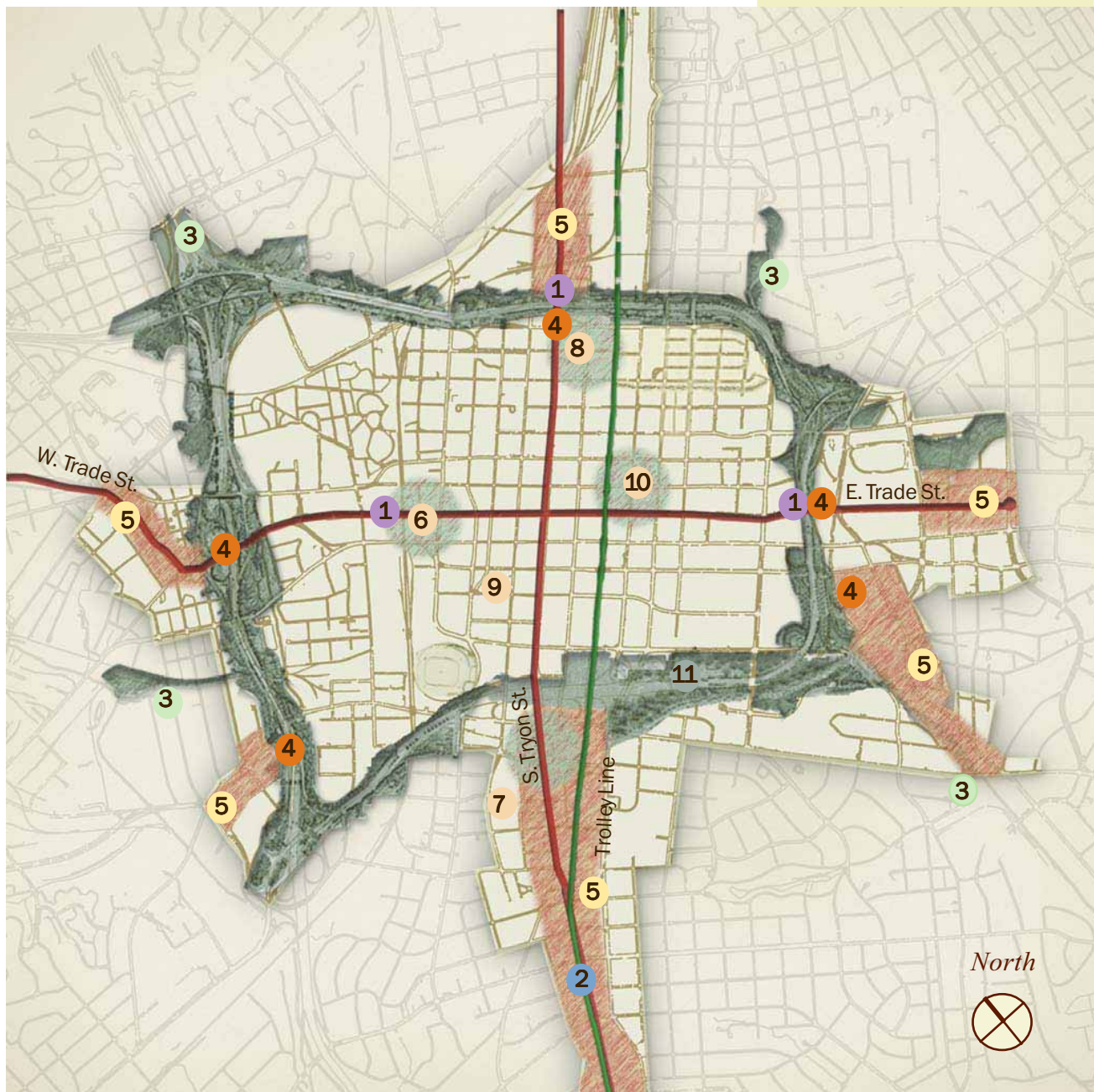




Figure 81: The linear park and regional greenways serve as points of connection.

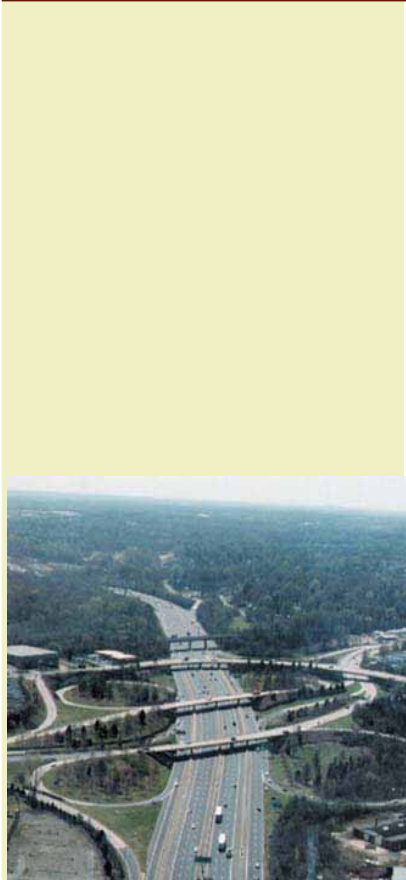


Figure 82: Aerial view of physical impact of the freeway on Center City's connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

“Growth catalyst projects” refer to efforts that are independent development opportunities with the capacity to offer significant economic benefit. Due to their ability to spur interest in the development of adjacent land, these projects can have a significant effect on their neighborhoods. Sports facilities, museums, and large educational complexes are examples of growth catalyst projects. Not all of the impacts of growth catalyst projects are positive. Decisions related to these initiatives are complicated, require broad-based public support and should favor projects that expand the tax base, increase local revenues and provide employment opportunities.

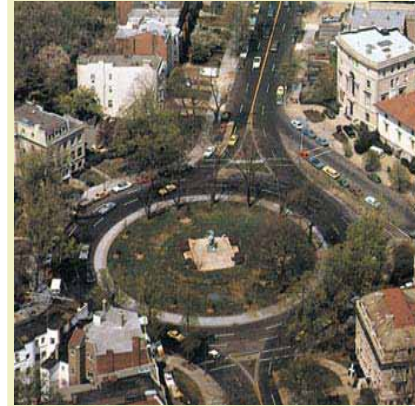
■ **Extend Center City Across the Freeway**

Center City’s growth potential and its relationship to surrounding neighborhoods were both severely impaired by the construction of the freeway. Any future planning efforts for Charlotte must investigate how this physical barrier can be diminished – visually, psychologically and socially. As the highway’s bridges and overpasses currently serve as the “gateways” into Center City, the potential for Charlotte to become memorable is linked to the improvement of these entryways.

Cross-loop, cross-neighborhood connections. One of the methods to psychologically break down the barrier of the freeway is to create compelling reasons to cross over or under this major roadway. Upon entering Center City from most directions, one first encounters parking lots. More inviting options should be developed across both sides of the freeway. Grocery stores, sporting venues, restaurants and entertainment sites will encourage travel between neighborhoods, along attractive paths, either over or under the freeway.

Several locations have been identified for functional catalyst projects. Consider the intersection of the railroad lines and

Figure 83: This circle in Washington, DC illustrates how parks, in conjunction with road systems, can create points of connection between neighborhoods.



West Trade Street. A significant attraction could support cross-loop connections by combining the region’s need for a centrally located Amtrak station with the community’s desire for a sports arena. This complex would include daytime, evening and weekend activities that could be complemented by the West Park and adjacent, existing parking facilities.

Elizabeth Avenue. Where Elizabeth Avenue meets the freeway, a joint parking and retail facility is proposed. Planned to serve the Government District and Central Piedmont Community College, this functional catalyst project recommends the creation of partnerships between these institutions to achieve development objectives.

Little Sugar Creek. The revitalization of Little Sugar Creek is an important step for downtown’s future for two reasons. First, this greenway is an essential connection in a regional parks system. Second, the potential for redevelopment around Little Sugar Creek presents a significant opportunity for new housing and establishment of connections between Center City, Dilworth and Midtown. This linkage should be reinforced by pedestrian improvements along Independence Boulevard and Stonewall Avenues.

Trolley as a connector. The impact of the trolley in Charlotte has the potential to provide one of the strongest links between neighborhoods and across the freeway. As residents and visitors travel via trolley, the sense of Center City’s separateness from neighborhoods like Wilmore, South End and Dilworth will be diminished.

Rail lines: the new Center City barrier? As the recent discussions surrounding the proposed local Amtrak and Norfolk/Southern rail line expansions have suggested, rail lines

Figure 84: Proposed redevelopment along a revitalized Little Sugar Creek – one of Center City’s regional park connections.





Figure 85: In Miami, a park constructed between elevated rail lines provides a gathering place for residents.

have the ability to separate neighborhoods. Growing issues about the width of train platforms and the proposed increase in the number of trains have raised questions about the disconnection of neighborhoods. The importance of including surrounding neighborhoods such as Wesley Heights, Biddleville, Seversville, Greenville and the Third and Fourth Wards in Center City should not be undermined by rail line construction and operations. Negotiations with rail companies and state agencies must highlight this concern.

Park connections. Recent greenway initiatives have reinforced the desire for strong linear parks that can link to a Center City system and foster opportunities to travel regionally on foot along creeks and through parks and neighborhoods. Similar to retail stores or sporting venues, parks should be located at the intersection of several neighborhoods can provide a variety of opportunities to sit, read, play, talk and people-watch. Traveling from Greenville Park to Center City Park to Freedom Park on a bike would certainly be a memorable and connective experience for Charlotte’s residents and visitors.

■ **Identify Reconnection Initiatives at the Freeway**

At specific points around the freeway, effective yet less drastic measures can be undertaken to improve linkages across the highway. Each bridge and overpass should be individually assessed to determine a series of measures to improve their physical conditions, specifically to attract pedestrian traffic. These efforts might include widening sidewalks, incorporating public art projects and improving pedestrian lighting under bridges. The uncomfortable walk along Stonewall Street as it passes under I-277 demonstrates how psychologically prohibitive the freeway has become. It is imperative that as Second Ward and the Midtown area develop, these critical connections are seamlessly integrated.



Figure 86: The freeway creates a barrier between Government District and Central Piedmont Community College. Construction of a functional catalyst project is encouraged to promote cross-loop activity. Design improvements to pedestrian underpasses are also recommended.

The Public Art Commission could become involved in many of these activities by assisting neighborhoods in the creation of their “gateways.” Rather than serving as a concrete and asphalt entrance to the city, the freeway’s overpasses could serve as canvases for the city’s finest art. Through their structure, pedestrian walkways, landscaping and murals, these bridges should make a positive statement about Charlotte’s commitment to its downtown and its architecture.

Other initiatives around the freeway will require greater effort and more funding. As recommended by the North Tryon Corridor Plan, the 12th Street overpass should be removed to create an at-grade crossing and to reduce the impact of North Tryon Street’s transition into North Charlotte. More significantly, the construction of a cap over the freeway between Second Ward, Dilworth and the South End presents an engineering and funding challenge with the ability to reap tremendous benefits for the unification of Center City’s neighborhoods. Please refer to the Freeway Cap section for further discussion.

Implementation Steps:

1. Maintain existing connections and establish new ones to Wesley Heights, West Morehead, Biddleville, Seversville, Greenville and Third and Fourth Wards during negotiations with the railroads and state agencies regarding the physical and operational expansion of rail service in Center City.
2. Consider a public art program as a method to improve the pedestrian experiences at I-277 underpasses at North Tryon Street, Independence Boulevard to Stonewall Street, Third Street to CPCC, and West Trade Street to Johnson C. Smith University.
3. Improve sidewalk connections at each of these locations.
4. Create development strategies for residential development adjacent to the freeway in the Cherry, Greenville, Belmont and other neighborhoods.



Figure 87: Proposed corridors for focused redevelopment.

- A West Trade Street
- B Wilkinson Boulevard
- C South Boulevard
- D Independence Boulevard
- E Elizabeth Avenue
- F North Tryon Corridor

■ Redevelop Key Corridors

Changes to the physical environment of the freeway will improve connections. However, these efforts should be combined with redevelopment along the corridors that approach the freeway. Specific areas for consideration include: West Trade Street from Five Points, Wilkinson Boulevard from the Airport, Independence Boulevard as it passes through Midtown Plaza, South Boulevard as it approaches from the South End, Elizabeth Avenue, and the North Tryon Corridor.

By encouraging street-level destinations, continuous building facades next to sidewalks, and pedestrian environments, these corridors will diminish the freeway's physical dominance as the point of separation between Center City and its surroundings. Application of the Pedestrian Overlay District zoning to these corridors is a first step. With the encouragement of public and private interests, the development of these entryways should trigger residential construction adjacent to the freeway in neighborhoods such as Cherry, Belmont, Optimist Park and Greenville.

Figure 88: Proposed Arena and Amtrak Station are illustrated in purple. Office buildings in red. Associated parking in grey (2010).

■ Locate Growth Catalyst Projects

The placement and design of growth catalyst projects will have an enormous impact on the memorability of the city. Site selection should carefully consider existing and adjacent uses. Because of the predominance of offices in Center City, facilities such as arenas and movie theaters should create agreements to share parking. Local ordinances and regulations should be rewritten to require this form of “co-locating” throughout the downtown.

In its report submitted in June 1999, the New Arena Committee assigned high priority to the availability of nearby, existing parking and the accessibility of transit facilities. Future site selection processes should follow this example. As transit becomes a viable alternative to automobile travel in Center City, the concept of taking the trolley and rapid transit to museums or a restaurant will not only be feasible, it will also be practical.

Partnerships between private developers should be encouraged. When appropriate, public agencies should also become involved. A successful combination of private resources is demonstrated in the shared parking garage at Mint and Second Streets. Used primarily by Duke Energy employees (Monday through Friday) and Ericsson Stadium attendees (Sunday), these separate entities have successfully combined interests to share one of Center City’s most valuable resources: parking. Similar arrangements must be promoted.



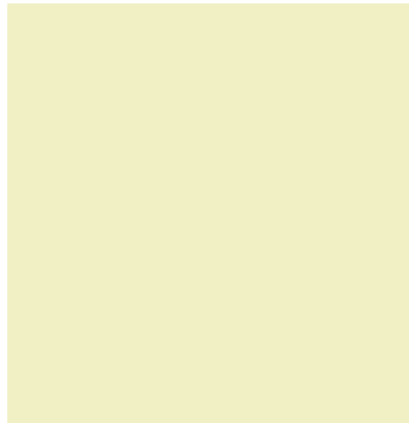
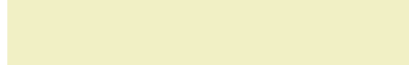


Figure 89: *Ericsson Stadium and the proposed baseball stadium create a unique district and opportunities for shared infrastructure.*



Arena: In this 2010 Vision Plan, the proposed arena has been located near the intersection of the Trade and Graham Streets. This site was selected because of the opportunity to leverage the community’s desire for a downtown arena with its need for an Amtrak Station and additional office space. Consolidating these uses into one complex maximizes land use, allows these facilities to share parking and transit, and creates a node of activity in Center City. Additionally, this site’s connection to a proposed east-west transit corridor supports the community’s commitment to transit uses. By including uses other than the arena in the complex, this facility will be an environment of 18-hour a day activity. Other possible locations in the Sports and Entertainment District would have utilized land that has been reserved for West Park in this plan. Because of the importance of a regional park in downtown, these alternative sites were eliminated.

Baseball Stadium: Across the country, cities have started locating their baseball facilities in their downtowns. Because of the number of days of activity and the potential for associated development, such as apartments, restaurants and sports-related entertainment, stadiums have served as true catalysts for downtown activity. As land availability diminishes in Center City, the need to expand the definition of Charlotte’s downtown grows. Improving connections between neighborhoods inside and outside the Freeway Loop will aid this objective. The baseball stadium has been recommended for the intersection of Carson Boulevard and South Tryon Street for three major reasons. First, a catalyst project at this location will continue to stimulate development and housing opportunities in the southside area of the city. Second, this site will further encourage strong connections across the Freeway Loop. Third, adjacency to the trolley should be a major consideration in locating a large public facility of this type.

Figure 90: Cincinnati's baseball stadium is located in its downtown and has served as a catalyst for new development.



Implementation Steps:

1. Recommend possible locations for catalyst projects, such as an arena, urban village, museums.
2. Prepare concept designs for a proposed baseball stadium, including surrounding mixed-use development. Create an imaging package for this concept.
3. Create a task force of representatives of local educational facilities to evaluate interest in and possible programs for an Education Quad along Trade Street.
4. Prepare a concept design for an Education Quad, incorporating underground parking.
5. Prepare a development strategy to approach national developers that have completed successful, complementary entertainment facilities adjacent to catalyst projects.



Figure 91: The integration of offices, housing, shopping and community space has created an 18-hour environment in Boston's Quincy Market.

■ **Create Balanced, 18-Hour Environments**

Catalyst projects should be sited to encourage balanced, 18-hour environments throughout Center City. Two neighborhoods, the Central Business District and the Government District, are currently imbalanced toward daytime activity. Introduction of new facilities in these areas should assign preference to nighttime uses, such as theaters and restaurants. Other sporting venues should be located near Ericsson Stadium in the Sports and Entertainment District, as seasons and times of activity for basketball, baseball and football complement one another. Siting facilities according to their peak times of operation not only encourages a vibrant Center City, but also allows shared use of parking, transit and open space among a variety of users.

TABLE: Activation Times of Common Public Facilities

Facility	Catalyst Type	Activation Time
Amphitheater	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Aquarium	Growth	Daytime/Weekend
Aquatic Center	Functional	Daytime/Weekend
Arena	Growth	Evening
Art Gallery	Growth	Evening
Baseball Stadium	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Convention Center	Growth	Daytime/Evening
Community Center	Functional	Daytime/Weekend
Entertainment Center	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Football Stadium	Growth	Weekend
Higher Education	Functional	Daytime/Evening
Hotel	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Ice Center	Growth	Daytime/Weekend
Movie Theater	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Museum	Growth	Daytime/Weekend
Office	Functional	Daytime
Performing Arts	Growth	Evening/Weekend
Residences	Functional	Evening/Weekend
Retail	Growth/Functional	Daytime/Evening/Week'd

■ Design for an Urban Condition

Madison Square Garden is an example of the successful integration of an arena, a train station and a parking garage in one structure. Although a project of that size would not be appropriate in Charlotte, the concept of incorporating or “stacking” a variety of complementary public facilities on one site is an effective approach to urban development. Partnerships between public and private interests should be formed to ensure that these civic buildings are designed to the highest standards with regard to the impact on adjacent neighborhoods. Additionally, these associations need to form the basis for a cooperative approach to Center City development, recognizing the irreplaceable value of the remaining land and the need to spend infrastructure money responsibly.

Implementation Steps:

1. Create urban standards and guidelines for large public facilities.
2. Encourage partnerships among private and public entities to allow for project “stacking.”
3. Prepare an amendment to the UMUD, minimizing the parking requirements for new public facilities, based on proximity to existing parking and transit.
4. Extend the Underground Utility District to include the entire area within the Freeway Loop.
5. Establish a Center City Design Review Board.

■ Design and Build a Freeway Cap

Walking down Caldwell Street toward Dilworth, a pedestrian encounters the “highway canyon” formed by Route 277. In communities like Seattle, Portland and Duluth, highway caps have provided needed urban space for destination parks. The construction of a cap across Route 277 should include a park to improve connections to Center City and to provide a shared neighborhood park for the residents of Second Ward, Dilworth and the South End. Design of the cap could be linked to a major project, such as a new Center City museum or a new baseball stadium.



Figure 92: Proposed North Tryon Street development, including the existing Tryon Center and the proposed Urban Village (2010).

■ Create Urban Design Principles for Significant Catalyst Projects

Numerous catalyst projects are recommended that have a significant and lasting impact on the character of Charlotte. The programming, site selection and urban design of all these facilities should support the following principles:

1. Leverage specific projects to create a vibrant downtown.

The essence of downtown is diversity, with a range of things to do and see. Public and private resources are limited and therefore should be leveraged to maximize their use throughout the day. Every project should seek opportunities for co-locating to create an 18-hour environment.

For example, in the 2010 Vision Plan, a single complex for the arena and proposed rail station is recommended. Under this condition, resources could be shared in the following ways:

- a) West Park open space with parking underground;
- b) a museum or other cultural facility to use parking during daytime;
- c) possible shared use of proposed First Union and Gateway Center parking structures during evening and weekend hours;
- d) air rights use of rail lines and station for office or residential development; and
- e) retail and restaurant support of arena events and surrounding office and residential development.

2. Emphasize compactness and intensity.

To promote pedestrian activity and vitality, development should be dense and walkable with a tight physical structure and efficient spatial arrangement. Compact urban development concentrates uses rather than spreading activity over a

broader area. Suburban standards of single-use buildings surrounded by parks and parking lots are discouraged. Large public facilities should fill existing gaps in the urban fabric. To accomplish this goal the following principles should be pursued:

- a) a continuously developed edge along streets that serve as primary paths of movement should be required; and
- b) plazas should be specifically designed to reinforce entranceways (these areas should be surrounded by active uses and linked to the existing street grid).

3. Balance with existing context.

New development should respond positively to its local and regional context through architecture that is special to Charlotte and the building's specific neighborhood. Specifically, catalyst projects should:

- a) complement surrounding building heights, scale, massing, façade organization and the use of materials, colors and roof shapes; and
- b) major facades and entrances should be oriented towards the street.

4. Provide for accessibility with functional linkages.

While vehicular access and parking should be convenient and efficient, a clear emphasis on pedestrian and transit mobility must be established. Projects should be aware of their effects on sidewalk patterns, with clear connections to bus and trolley access. Emphasis should be placed on:

- a) creating a sense of human scale, activity, and interest at the street level to enhance its pedestrian appeal and to promote the integration of individual projects and development blocks; and
- b) locating catalyst projects along existing or proposed transit routes.

5. Build a positive civic identity.

Downtown must have a positive identity to remain successful and viable over time. Design of all urban infrastructures including streets, sidewalks, bridges, parks and all major buildings must be thoughtful, creative and world-class.

Neighborhood Plans

Encourage a mix of uses in each neighborhood that reinforces its distinct character and allows people to work, learn and play within walking distance of their homes.

Goals

Pedestrian

Encourage the development of pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that provide goods and services to its residents within a 10-minute walk of their home.

Mixed

Offer a variety of uses – office, home, school, store – within each neighborhood to promote active communities throughout the day, evening and weekends.

Varied

Promote unique neighborhoods throughout Center City by celebrating the different histories, people and character of each one.

Recommendations

Before the construction of the freeway and urban renewal, Center City was a series of neighborhoods. Each one had distinct character. Fourth Ward has maintained its history and unique qualities during these changes. Third Ward has remained intact, even with the dramatic infill of new residential units. Second and First Wards no longer represent their pasts. However, this is not the end of the story about these neighborhoods; it is the beginning.

Charlotte has committed itself to creating neighborhoods in Center City for many years. From new construction in Third Ward to waiting lists for housing in First Ward, it is evident the times have changed. Great cities are a cluster of unique neighborhoods. The most interesting and vibrant ones are consistently located in the heart of everything. To become the center of the region and a memorable place, Charlotte needs to

DIAGRAM: Existing and Proposed Neighborhoods

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 Greenville | 11 Elizabeth |
| 2 Lockwood | 12 Seversville |
| 3 North Tryon Corridor | 13 CBD (Central Business District) |
| 4 Optimist Park | 14 Wesley Heights |
| 5 Fourth Ward | 15 West Morehead |
| 6 North Tryon | 16 Sports and Entertainment |
| 7 First Ward | 17 Second Ward |
| 8 Biddleville | 18 Dilworth |
| 9 Third Ward | 19 Midtown |
| 10 Government District | 20 South End |

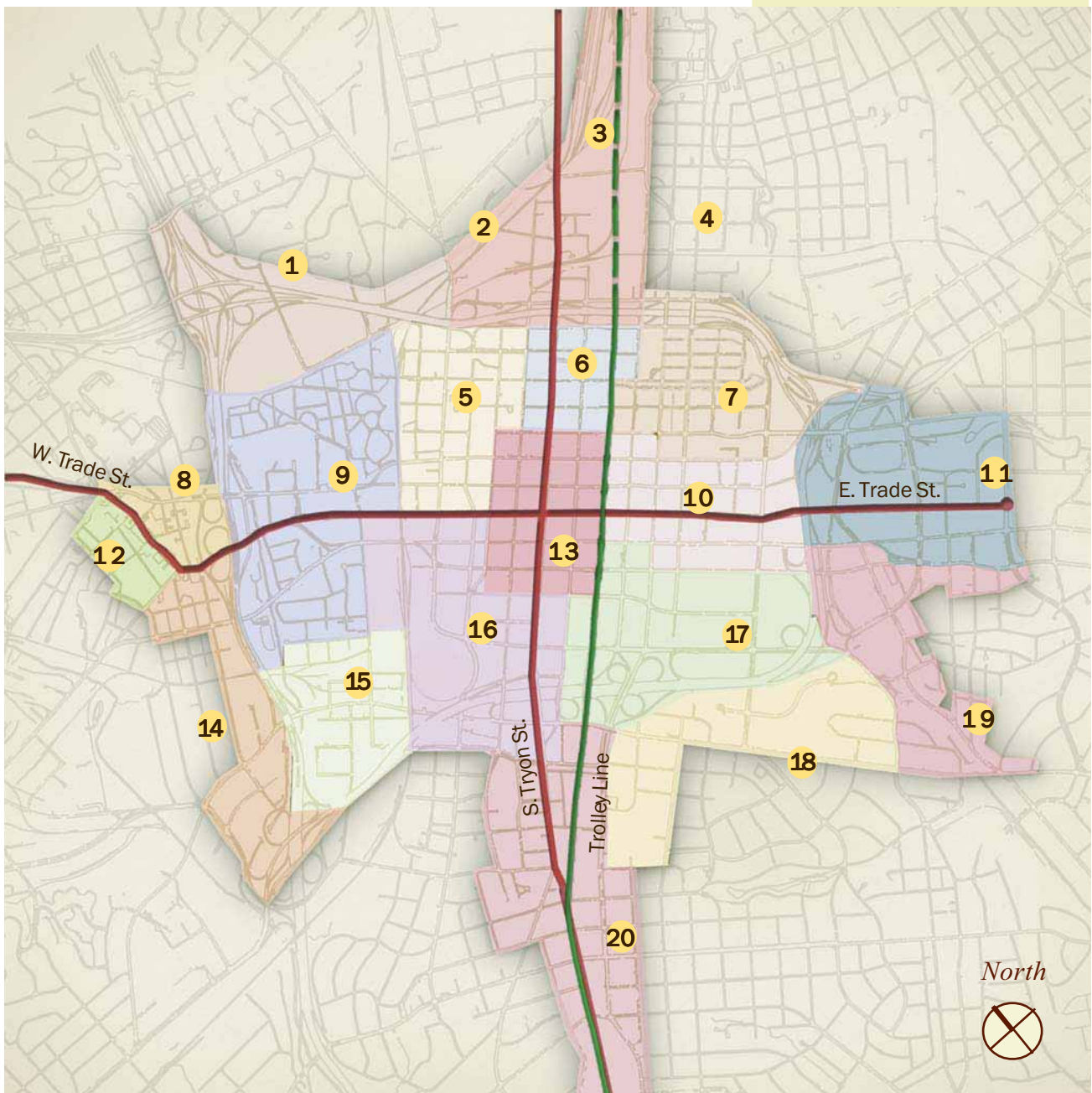




Figure 93: *Urban neighborhoods should have unique character in order to be memorable.*

further encourage the development of diverse, livable, dense and distinct neighborhoods.

For the purposes of this plan, a “neighborhood” is a collection of buildings, uses, parks, streets, transit and people that can be accessed within a typical ten-minute walk, or within 1,250 linear feet. Some neighborhoods, such as the Sports and Entertainment District, will not include many homes. Others will focus on a residential environment, like Third and Fourth Ward. Each neighborhood is discussed in terms of their future potential looking toward 2010. All of these neighborhoods hold tremendous opportunity to offer a unique and important step in Center City’s path to memorability.

Vision for Center City Neighborhoods

Many neighborhoods in Center City are established and have clear primary uses – First and Third Ward: residential; Central Business District: office. For these areas, future planning should support these primary uses with retail stores, professional office space or additional residential. Recommended new neighborhoods such as Second Ward and the Sports and Entertainment District will need to identify primary uses as well as supporting ones.

First Ward

As one of the most recent examples of Charlotte’s dedication to downtown living, First Ward’s residential renaissance should continue with greater emphasis on higher densities and a wider range of housing costs. At the corner of McDowell and Seventh Streets, the government-owned land at that site should include high-density residential development. To



Figure 94: *Multi-family housing and streetscape improvements in Center City’s First Ward.*



Figures 95 and 96: Marshall Park and the Board of Education building: proposed site for an urban school, multi-family residential units and Second Ward Park/Amphitheater (existing left, proposed below).

support the new and existing homes, ground-floor, neighborhood retail, such as convenience stores, dry cleaners, and food establishments should be encouraged. Finally, the Ninth Street Greenway should be connected to the proposed parks and open space system.

Second Ward

Similar to the First Ward, Second Ward should also include high-density residential development, but more of it. As one of the areas with the greatest amount of development opportunity inside the freeway, Second Ward has the potential to become one of the most vibrant new Center City neighborhoods. Because the location and quality of local schools is a major factor in home selection, a new proposed Second Ward school should serve as an attraction for residents. This new neighborhood will be a central component of Charlotte's regional downtown.



Third Ward

One of Charlotte's older existing neighborhoods, the Third Ward is characterized by single-family homes and new multi-family facilities as well as one of Center City's most significant new mixed-use developments, Gateway Village. The residents need neighborhood-based retail in the form of a small grocery store, a drug store and other similar establishments. For this neighborhood especially, the changes to the rail line will have the most dramatic effect. Efforts to mitigate negative impacts should be aggressive.

Ongoing efforts to reconfigure and provide programming for Frazier and Third Ward Parks should continue with the direct input of the neighborhood's residents. The initiatives of the *Third Ward Future: A Land Use and Design Plan for*



Figure 97: Single-family housing with small neighborhood park in Fourth Ward.

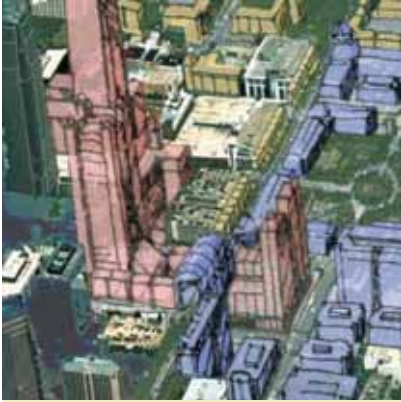


Figure 98: Proposed mixed-use development at former convention center site. Note the dense development (illustrated in purple) along the trolley line (2010).

an Uptown Charlotte Neighborhood were products of resident visioning and participation. Continued support should be assigned to its basic principles: mixed-uses along Trade Street, improvements to Irwin Park and its connections, as well as stabilizing existing housing.

Fourth Ward

Fourth Ward is one of Center City’s most recognized and historic neighborhoods. As a residential community, Fourth Ward needs to continue new home construction but with increased densities on vacant tracts. In addition to providing stores and services for its resident population, the neighborhood should connect its small parks to the proposed open space system. Like Third Ward, the impacts of rail line expansion on the Fourth Ward must be carefully monitored.

Central Business District

Within the Central Business District, one of the next decade’s most significant development parcels is the former Convention Center site. Recommended for high-rise, mixed-use development, this parcel should be investigated for potential transit use on the ground floor.

Street-level retail and office-related service should be encouraged throughout this neighborhood, particularly around the urban plazas. In conjunction with the traffic calming initiatives of the pedestrian core, the sidewalk environment should be enhanced with efforts similar to those already completed on Tryon Street.

Office development should continue, with careful attention to comprehensive parking management. Policies to discourage the current “office building/adjacent parking garage” pattern should be initiated.

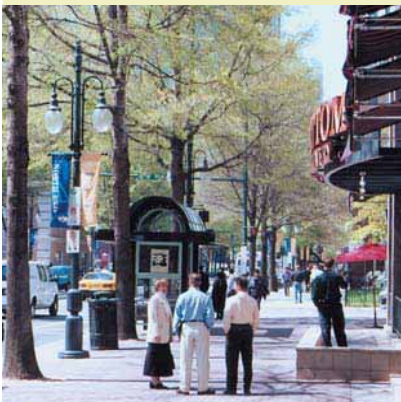


Figure 99: The streetscape along Tryon Street creates a pedestrian-friendly environment in the heart of Charlotte’s Central Business District.



Government District

Changes in the Government District will require more than a reevaluation of its physical form. Looking forward to 2010, the entities that comprise the Government District must work together in determining their spatial and operational needs. In the coming years, the construction of courthouse facilities, a consolidated parking garage, and the possible relocation of the Hal Marshall Center and the Board of Education, will be critical points of discussion for this group.

Like the Central Business District, the Government District has a sizable workforce of approximately 9,000 employees that lacks basic neighborhood retail and services. Street-level establishments of this kind are encouraged for this constituency.

Because it connects Johnson C. Smith University, the proposed Education Quad, the Government District and Central Piedmont Community College, Trade Street should become Charlotte's great "civic street." Throughout the Government District, sidewalk amenities such as benches, street lighting, landscaping and banners should reflect Trade Street's central importance to the neighborhood.

North Tryon

An "urban village" will support the continued development of the North Tryon neighborhood. Regional retail attractions, office towers on Tryon Street and multi-family residential will create this complex, intended to offer unique shopping opportunities and to sustain a core of 18-hour a day activity. This urban village will serve as the cornerstone of the North Tryon neighborhood and a point of connection to the North Tryon Corridor and Lockwood neighborhood across the freeway.

Figure 100: Aerial view of the area to house the proposed Government District. The relocation or elimination of surface parking is expected to offer opportunities for new construction.

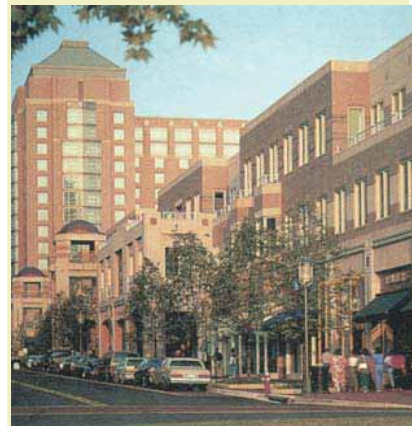


Figure 101: Reston Town Center, located outside of Washington, DC, is one possible model for the urban village in the North Tryon neighborhood.



Figure 102: Due to its proximity to Center City, the West Morehead neighborhood has great potential for residential and office space in converted factories and warehouses.

As an additional method of breaking down the freeway barrier for this neighborhood, improvements to the Tryon Street overpass, including sidewalk widening, introduction of streetscape elements and a public art initiative, are suggested. This effort should be undertaken in conjunction with the potential dismantling of the 12th Street overpass.

West Morehead

The former industrial neighborhood known as West Morehead still retains many small warehouse buildings. Conversion of these sites into lofts for residential or professional office use would be a memorable statement for this area. As an emerging Center City neighborhood, West Morehead's character should evolve into an affordable community for Charlotte's students, artists and young families. Because this neighborhood is adjacent to the train tracks, the expansion of the rail lines could have a significant effect on West Morehead, as well.

These general principles should be undertaken based on the specific recommendations outlined in the *West Morehead Corridor Vision and Concept Plan* (1999).



Figure 103: Midtown is one of the neighborhoods most impacted by its separation from Center City by I-277.

Midtown

One of the neighborhoods that was separated from Center City by the freeway, Midtown has great potential as an emerging community. At the former cinema site, mixed-use development (predominantly multi-family residential) would be an effective catalyst for this neighborhood. Midtown residents need a better walking path and experience to the Center City. In addition to widening sidewalks and upgrading pedestrian lighting, Independence Boulevard should be targeted for overpass improvement, where it passes under the freeway.



Sports and Entertainment District

The Sports and Entertainment District, anchored by Ericsson Stadium, is intended to serve as a focal point for Center City’s recreational activities – ranging from outdoor events in Center City Park to professional basketball games in the proposed arena. Providing a vibrant evening and weekend environment, this neighborhood should include high-density residential towers adjacent to Center City Park, thus offering daytime liveliness as well. Additional venues in this district should involve the conversion of the Federal Courthouse Building to a museum or a facility for another daytime activity.

As the location for many of Center City’s proposed catalyst projects, the impact of the Sports and Entertainment District on downtown’s infrastructure must be evaluated. Whenever possible, opportunities such as the arena, Amtrak station and office complex, should be maximized to offer shared parking. Maintaining vehicular access to venues like the arena and Ericsson Stadium is also a critical issue, as these facilities will generate large attendance on numerous occasions in a concentrated area.

South End

The growth of the South End as an entertainment center for Charlotte needs to be connected to the proposed development of the Center City. Projects such as the baseball stadium and the Freeway Cap will be essential elements of this linkage to the Sports and Entertainment District as well as the convention center. Because this neighborhood should continue to encourage high and mid-density residential buildings, South End’s pedestrian paths must be strengthened through efforts like the cap, the trolley and the linear park.

Figure 104: With stadium parking incorporated into new development, the Sports and Entertainment District has the opportunity to become the center of downtown’s night and weekend activity.



Figure 105: The South End neighborhood has tremendous potential for additional growth, principally because of the housing market’s interest in the trolley.

Impact on Neighborhoods Adjacent to Center City

Minimizing the freeway as a barrier is a 2010 Vision Plan priority. Accordingly, several recommendations are proposed for the future of each surrounding neighborhood. These suggestions address the “edge conditions” between these communities and Center City.

In **Dilworth**, the blocks next to the freeway have transformed from private homes to professional offices. Upon construction of the Freeway Cap, a return to residential uses in this area will become necessary as people seek opportunities to live near Center City without being downtown. Due to its role as a transitional area, the section of Dilworth that is closest to the freeway should encourage medium densities and heights. However, development in Dilworth must continue with careful consideration of its intact historic character and urban fabric.

As residential growth proceeds in **Elizabeth**, the development of Elizabeth Avenue based on the “urban village” concept is recommended with street-level retail and multi-level residential above. This approach can provide a vibrant neighborhood main street as well as needed stores and services to the community.

One of the neighborhoods that has already experienced the dramatic effect of the rail lines is **Lockwood**. The train tracks have isolated Lockwood from downtown and left few options for land use. This highway infrastructure, specifically the 12th Street overpass, should be reduced to improve physical connections along the North Tryon Corridor and to the Lockwood neighborhood. Additionally, land adjacent to the freeway should be encouraged for high-density, mixed-use redevelopment.

As one of the major arterials through **Seversville** and **Biddleville**, West Trade Street is not an attractive entryway to and from downtown. Because of its prominence, Trade Street is recommended for redevelopment as the main street of these neighborhoods by providing street-level retail in addition to workforce and student housing on the upper levels. Improved pedestrian

conditions between Johnson C. Smith University and Center City are also important, especially in light of the school's recent stadium construction. One of the greatest problems affecting these neighborhoods is the quality of the current housing stock. Measures to improve living conditions by providing new housing opportunities for existing residents and through development incentives must be pursued.

A traditional residential community, **Wesley Heights** will benefit from enhanced connections to Center City. Other methods of commuting, particularly on foot or on bicycle via the parks and open space system, will provide additional interest in this thriving neighborhood. Continuing efforts should include the strengthening of connections to Center City along West Morehead Street and supporting the construction and rehabilitation of homes, as identified in the *Wesley Heights Neighborhood Strategic Redevelopment Plan*.

Separated from Center City by a light industrial district, **Wilmore** is one of the most removed Center City neighborhoods. However, because of its traditional residential character, this community must be prepared for the impact of Center City's growth. Densities in Wilmore should maximize land area, while respecting this community's "town" character. The exception to this concept is the land adjacent to the trolley line, which should support higher density development and create a destination point for Wilmore.

Immediately outside of the freeway lies Greenville Park. As the active playfields for **Greenville**, this neighborhood park can provide a vital point of connection to Center City. Under this 2010 Plan, Greenville Park will be reconfigured as a highlight of the Center City parks and open space system. Similar to other open spaces throughout Charlotte, residential construction is recommended to ensure regular activity and watchful eyes to provide natural safety.

The **Belmont and Optimist Park** neighborhoods will be impacted by the growth of the North Tryon Corridor, Lockwood and Elizabeth. As the freeway undergoes scheduled repair and reconstruction in the future, mechanisms to provide memorable entryways into Center City from these communities should be investigated.

Conclusion

Achieving the Vision

The idea to make Charlotte a memorable city came from the community. Charlotte residents, not architects, urban planners or developers, wanted to create a downtown that was a source of continued pride. Throughout this document, the importance and impact of citizen input cannot be understated.

For the past year, the consultant team's responsibilities included listening to community recommendations, incorporating national and technical experience, and seeking the advice of public officials, government staff and local stakeholders. This document is the product of that effort and the result of a collective vision for the future of this great city.

However, the number and complexity of the recommendations in the 2010 Vision Plan constitute an enormous task. Everyone agrees that Charlotte should be a memorable place, but where to start?

The vision statement for the 2010 Vision Plan is "to create a livable and memorable Center City of distinct neighborhoods connected by unique infrastructure." Therefore, the following ten priorities are the most basic initiatives -- addressing issues related to livability, memorability and distinct neighborhoods -- that are the most essential to the plan's success.

THE LIVABLE CRITICAL STEP: A Mix of Uses in Downtown

What does it mean to have a “livable” downtown? Quite simply, people want to live there. Throughout Mecklenburg County, there are many residents who are interested in moving to Center City. A range of housing types and rental rates are the keys to encouraging a vibrant mix of people downtown.

Charlotte is beginning to develop successful, urban mixed-use projects. Instead of traditional planning models which would relegate houses to the First and Fourth Wards and office buildings to the Central Business District, new developments are starting to incorporate houses, offices, stores, hotels and public facilities in one block. At the former convention center site, several of these uses have been incorporated into one building. Let this project serve as an example for future development in Center City.

One of these potential new mixed-use developments should be an “urban village” along North Tryon Street. Including offices, housing, regional destination shopping and entertainment, an urban village offers many benefits to a growing urban downtown. As a connection between the new neighborhood development in First Ward, the trolley line and Tryon Street, the urban village concept provides a transition between these areas of downtown and creates an area of 18-hour activity.

Livability Priorities

1. Support private efforts to develop at least 6,000 more residential units for a variety of densities, types and income levels in downtown.
2. Continue efforts to redevelop the former convention center site as a mixed-use facility, which can serve as a demonstration project for similar efforts in Center City.
3. Issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the government-owned land along North Tryon Street and create a development strategy for an “urban village.”

THE MEMORABLE CRITICAL STEP: A Connected Parks System

As downtown continues to grow, land opportunities become scarce. One of the main objectives of the 2010 Vision Plan is to recommend initiatives that require immediate attention, before decisions that are difficult to reverse are made.

Center City needs a downtown regional park. As people who live in an urban environment often forfeit their front yards, downtown park systems become important. Additionally, a regional park provides space for community recreation for Center City dwellers and suburban residents alike.

This major open space, referred to as West Park in the plan, would serve as the heart of a Center City park system. West Park should be surrounded by development, linked to major public facilities, and include underground parking.

A memorable Charlotte of parks, trees and green spaces should begin at the gateways to Center City. Currently, barren land and an asphalt freeway welcome visitors to downtown. In the freeway's right-of-way and, when necessary, along nearby streets, a Linear Park should be created to improve the entrances to Center City and to provide an area for active recreation.

Green streets are a unique concept. Imagine a parkway along an urban street. A green street would include two lanes of traffic and wide sidewalks to accommodate trees, landscaping, benches, bike paths and walking trails. Four green streets are proposed in Center City. By including the green streets as part of the parks system, every downtown resident will be a five-minute walk from a park. Communities across the country will seek to emulate this bold re-evaluation of downtown streets.

Memorability Priorities

4. Acquire land for West Park.
5. Build a Linear Park adjacent to the I-277 Freeway.
6. Redesign Second, Ninth, Poplar and Davidson Streets as Green Streets.

Charlotte's future is full of potential. The next ten years are critical in determining how this potential will be realized. The path to creating a livable and memorable downtown will include many difficult obstacles and choices. The first important step – articulating a vision and a plan – is now complete. The process is underway to make a noteworthy Center City that is a source of community pride and continued economic prosperity.

DISTINCT NEIGHBORHOODS CRITICAL STEP: Unique Center City Neighborhoods

To accommodate a mix of uses in Center City, existing facilities should be consolidated, where possible. Government buildings throughout downtown are a good example. For a memorable city, a Government District should be a recognizable neighborhood, dense with government and other uses as well as architecturally distinct. The creation of a Government District for Charlotte is recommended.

In the aftermath of Charlotte's urban renewal practices, Second Ward ceased to be a neighborhood. Today, surface parking surrounds several independent buildings and a rarely used Marshall Park. Historically and geographically, however, Second Ward is one of the most important areas of Center City. A variety of new uses are recommended to achieve the end goal of creating a new neighborhood in Second Ward.

An underutilized resource is located within Center City, just outside of the Freeway Loop. Little Sugar Creek has the potential to provide recreation and quiet reflection opportunities for nearby residents. Additionally, it could unlock residential development potential along its edges. As part of the Center City parks system and as a point of connection between neighborhoods inside and outside the Freeway Loop, the revitalization of Little Sugar Creek has numerous possibilities.

In this 2010 Vision Plan, a new neighborhood is recommended that is extremely important to downtown's prosperity and land use as well as being centrally located. Named the Sports and Entertainment District, this area includes Ericsson Stadium and the proposed arena, West Park, and baseball stadium. Because this neighborhood will be basically "starting from scratch," a master plan for this area should be undertaken.

Distinct Neighborhoods Priorities

7. Consolidate government uses in the proposed Government District neighborhood.
8. Prepare a master plan for the redevelopment of Second Ward into a neighborhood, with focused attention on housing, a reconfigured Marshall Park, and a new school.
9. Encourage development around a revitalized Little Sugar Creek.
10. Prepare a master plan for the Sports and Entertainment District.

Acknowledgments

Elected and advisory officials, board members (serving 1999-2000), professionals and citizens who helped make the *2010 Vision Plan* possible.

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