



PLAZA-CENTRAL PEDSCAPE PLAN



CHARLOTTE

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission
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Plaza-Central Pedscape Plan

Executive Summary

1. Purpose of the Plan

The Pedscape Plan defines a compact, pedestrian oriented future for the Plaza Central District, and shows how this vision will be achieved: by providing standards for private sector investment in new development, and by making recommendations for public sector improvements. This plan supercedes the *Central District Plan* as land use policy for the area within the PED boundaries.

This plan is intended to serve several purposes:

- Serve as the future land use policy document for its area.
- Identify the ultimate curb line for district streets, as well as building setbacks and streetscape requirements for new development.
- Recommend possible public investments to enhance the pedestrian environment.

The provisions of the Pedestrian Overlay zoning district require adoption of a Pedscape Plan prior to approval of a PED rezoning. A rezoning application has been filed, and its approval will be undertaken as a follow-up action to this plan.

2. Plan Development and Process

The Pedscape Plan is a follow-through from the 1998 Plaza Central Revitalization Study. During this study process, a series of design charrettes led by outside consultants included residents, property owners, business owners, and developers, and an interdepartmental team of City staff. Beginning in fall 2002, additional public meetings were held to flesh out the specifics of the Pedscape Plan.

3. Description of the District

District Boundary: The district boundary was drawn to include all of the parcels fronting on Central Avenue from its intersection with Independence Boulevard to Nandina Street, and other parcels in



walkable proximity zoned for business, office, or mixed-use. The district also includes an area currently zoned industrial located adjacent to Central Avenue. See Map 1, page 8.

Existing Zoning: The majority of properties within the Plaza-Central District are zoned for B-2 General Business (55.7 acres or 67%.) A sizeable area zoned I-2 General Industrial is in the district (17.9 acres or 22%.) There are smaller areas of O-2 Office, B-1 Neighborhood Business, MUDD Mixed Use Development, O-6 Office, and R-22MF Multi-family Residential. See Map 1, Page 8.

Existing Land Use: Current land uses in the area consist primarily of commercial/retail uses. There are some offices, and institutional uses (library, church, post office, and school). The industrial area has transitioned to retail and office uses appropriate to the district, although some small shop and warehouse uses remain. The district abuts residential neighborhoods on several sides, but the Pedscape Plan area includes only scattered single- and multi-family dwellings. See Map 2, page 11.

Community Design: Building forms in the Plaza-Central District reflect all of the changes that have occurred over the past century. There are large old houses and factory loft buildings; early commercial structures built along the public sidewalk dating from the earlier pedestrian and streetcar eras; and several generations of automobile-

oriented buildings with ever-increasing parking lots. The overall result is a haphazard arrangement that is difficult for pedestrians as well as for those in cars seeking to make multiple stops.

4. Vision for the District

The overall vision is to create a vibrant mixed use district serving the neighborhoods surrounding the Plaza-Central District, and to become a model of realizing a historic way of living while protecting what is special about the area.

The approach to the vision is:

- New development in this area should not destroy or detract from the human scale and fabric of the area
- Specifically, existing historic retail space and building forms along Central Avenue should be protected.
- Non-historical and inefficient properties on the perimeter should be enhanced by redevelopment and re-merchandising to create vibrant retail streets.

Based on the existing conditions and vision statements, Map 4, page 21 shows Key Concepts for the district.

5. Recommended Land Uses

The Plan calls for a highly walkable compact mixed-use retail village in the vicinity of Central Avenue, The Plaza, Commonwealth Avenue, and Pecan Avenue. The area immediately surrounding the Central Five Points Intersection (Central and Louise Avenues) is a second retail node needed for support of adjoining residential neighborhoods. The remaining portions of the district are recommended for Office Mixed-use. In these areas, office and residential uses would predominate, with retail and restaurant uses on ground floors of multi-story buildings. See Map 5, page 23.

Most aspects of the Land Use section recommendations either are consistent with existing underlying zoning, or are addressed through the

establishment of the PED overlay itself. However, portions of the district are zoned I-2 for industrial uses. For the most part, these areas have transitioned to appropriate retail and office uses. The areas zoned I-2 should be rezoned to B-2 Business. The recommended rezonings are indicated on Map 7, page 49.

6. Recommended Cross Sections & Streetscape Development Standards

The standards in this section supplement the requirements of the PED zoning. This section recommends future cross-sections for streets, and identifies building setbacks and streetscape standards based on the ultimate curblineline location. Standards for setbacks, sidewalks, and planting strips will be met by developers who undertake new development or major renovations in the PED area. The streets within the Plaza-Central District are categorized into six “Types,” shown on Map 6, page 24. Table 1 on the following page summarizes the street cross section features of the various Types.

The setback and cross-section requirements for most of the street types are based on continuation of the existing curblines. An important concept for most of these street types is that “the future begins now.” Redeveloping properties should be built to the intended design immediately.

The proposed Type 3 street section will require implementation at a single point in time as part of a City Capital Improvement. Phasing over a period of time by block is also a possibility. Until street improvements are made, setback and planting requirements based on the future cross section will be in effect for new development, and onsite design must take the future cross section into account

Tree planting requirements in this section will supercede the “Perimeter Planting Requirements” in Section 21-13(C) of the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. However, all other requirements of the tree ordinance will apply to new development in the Plaza-Central Pedestrian Overlay District.

Table 1

Summary of Proposed Cross Section Features							
	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5A	Type 5B	Type 6
	<i>Village Center</i>	<i>Village Streets</i>	<i>Wide Village Streets</i>	<i>Village Edge</i>	<i>Central West Basic Area</i>	<i>Central West Bike Option Area</i>	<i>Cross Streets</i>
Right-of-way (no changes)	60 feet	varies 50 to 60 feet	80 feet	60 feet	varies 60 to 70 feet	varies 60 to 70 feet	varies 50 feet typical
Existing Curbline (curb to curb)	46 feet	varies 30 feet typical	varies	varies 48 to 50 feet typ.	varies 46 to 58 ft. typ.	varies 46 to 58 ft. typ.	varies
Future Curbline (curb to curb)	unchanged	unchanged	roadway 30 feet parking 70 feet	unchanged	unchanged	unchanged (possib. 8-ft. future bike lane widening)	unchanged
On-street parking	none	varies unchanged	reverse angled parking (max. 6 spaces separated by tree islands)	optional recessed parking replaces 8-ft. planting strip (max. 4 sp. long)	optional recessed parking replaces 8-ft. planting strip (max. 4 sp. long)	optional recessed parking replaces 8-ft. planting strip (max. 4 sp. long)	varies; unchanged (optional recessed parking in some cases, max 4 sp.)
Min. Bldg. Setback (from back of curb)	15 feet or match existing	16 feet	40 ft. from roadway 20 ft. from pkg.	24 ft. from roadway 16 ft. from pkg.	28 ft. from roadway 20 ft. from pkg.	32 ft. from roadway 24 ft. from pkg. (allows 4 ft. possib. bike lane ea. side)	14 feet
Sidewalk	full min. setback	full min. setback	10 feet back from parking	16 feet back from pkg. or planting strip	8 feet back from pkg. or planting strip	12 feet back from pkg. or planting strip	6 feet back from planting strip
Tree Planting (30-foot interval)	none	curbed planters at sidewalk edge	islands in parking aisle; supplemented by planting behind sidewalk	8-ft. planting strip at curb and/or curbed planters at sidewalk edge	8-ft. planting strip at curb and/or planting behind sidewalk	8-ft. planting strip at curb and/or planting behind sidewalk	8-ft. planting strip (must provide alt. planting if parking option is used)
See Map 6 for location of streetscape types							

7. Recommended Streetscape and Pedestrian Improvements

Site- Specific Recommendations

1. *Reconfiguration of the Central Five Points Intersection:* The intersection where Central Avenue meets Louise Avenue should be improved by extending curbs and adding an island in Central Avenue east of Louise Avenue where Tenth Street veers off. Figure 7, page 42 shows how the revised intersection will work in concept.
2. *Street Reconfiguration of Commonwealth Avenue and The Plaza:* The recommended Type 3 street configuration will need to be constructed as a unit, or at minimum in full block increments. The City should initiate design and engineering studies, conduct further input, and proceed with construction once details and funding are in place.
3. *Midblock Pedestrian Path from Thomas Avenue to The Plaza:* This will allow people to move around without having to move their cars, and connect to parking areas behind buildings. It would follow the alley south of the Thomas Street Tavern, and use excess width in the parking bay south of the Post Office, as shown on Map 4, Key Concepts.
4. *Connection Street, Commonwealth Avenue to Clement Avenue:* The Key Concepts Map (Map 4) shows a future street connection through the existing large property south of Central Avenue and west of Pecan Avenue. It will improve circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles, and offer improved development opportunity by creating high-visibility street frontage.

General Recommendations

1. *Bulb-Outs:* There are some bulb-outs in place on parts of Thomas Avenue, Gordon Street, and Pecan Avenue. Additional bulb-outs at intersections where on-street parking exists and where there is adequate roadway width are recommended.

2. *Pedestrian Crossings:* Pedestrian refuge medians supplement crossings at signalized intersections. Crossing locations along Central Avenue are suggested between Pecan Avenue and the railroad track; and between the railroad track and Louise Avenue.

3. *Marked Cross-Walks:* Portions of Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and Nandina Street have brick crosswalks in place. Improvements to additional cross-walks at signalized intersections are recommended.

4. *Pedestrian-Scale Lighting:* Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and Nandina Street has such lighting in place. Additional pedestrian-scale, decorative lighting should be installed in other areas, with priority to areas of highest pedestrian and redevelopment activity.

5. *Bicycle Parking:* The City of Charlotte should install racks for short-term bicycle parking near the public parking lot at Central and Thomas Avenues.

6. *Street Trees:* Street trees should be planted in the public right-of-way where there are opportunities for new or replacement trees.

7. *Public Art:* The City of Charlotte should work with the neighborhood and arts organizations on locations for public art. Potential locations include the Central Five Points intersection at Louise Avenue, and the open space at Central and Pecan Avenues.

8. *ADA/Curb Ramps:* ADA ramps generally are in place throughout the district. The City of Charlotte should conduct an inventory to assess needs for new construction or realignment of these ramps.

9. *Benches, Trash Cans:* The City also should install public benches and trash cans in appropriate high-pedestrian traffic locations.

Long Term Recommendation

Utility Line Consolidation/Relocation: If funding is ever made available, overhead utility lines should be relocated, to alleys where possible, or out of the Central Avenue right-of-way, and/or buried within the Plaza-Central District.

Part I: INTRODUCTION

1. Pedscape Plan and Overlay Zoning

As a part of the renewed focus on urban areas and the close-in neighborhoods, Charlotte's elected officials are placing new emphasis on providing a wider range of transportation choices and development forms to improve the livability and sustainability of our neighborhoods. We can enhance livability by turning attention back toward pedestrians, and creating spaces that serve them. Provision of public improvements for pedestrians is another way the City can invest in its neighborhoods and leverage additional private investment.

This "Pedscape Plan" is intended to serve several purposes:

- It is the future land use plan for the Plaza-Central area. As such, it serves as an updated planning document for the area, supplementing and/or replacing the *Central District Plan*. Where in conflict, the *Plaza-Central Pedscape Plan* will supercede the *Central District Plan* as the land use policy plan for the area.



The Plaza-Central PED District extends generally along Central Avenue from Independence Boulevard to Nandina Street



- It identifies an "ultimate" curb line for the street, and appropriate building setbacks and streetscape requirements (such as sidewalks and tree planting) for new development from that curbline. These are implemented through accompanying Pedestrian Overlay (PED) zoning.
- It includes recommendations for possible public investments to enhance the pedestrian environment.

Charlotte's Zoning Ordinance contains over 30 different zoning districts, each of which has its own regulations and requirements. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance contains various overlay districts, such as the Mountain Island Lake Watershed Overlay District, Manufactured Home Overlay District, and Historic Overlay District.

An overlay district superimposes additional or alternative development and urban design standards on the basic underlying zoning. In general, the overlay district does not alter the uses allowed in the underlying zoning districts.

An overlay district is a useful tool when there are a variety of zoning districts in an area. For example, in the Plaza Central area, there are six base zoning districts, each with differing front, side, and rear setback requirements. An overlay district can override the varying base zone setbacks with one set of requirements, thereby requiring new development to be built in a more unified manner along a street.



Streetscape improvements from the 1990's, including brick sidewalks and pedestrian scale lighting

Charlotte City Council adopted the Pedestrian Overlay District (referred to as “PED”) in March 2000 to create and protect livable, walkable Charlotte neighborhoods. The purpose of the PED District is to reestablish an urban fabric by promoting a mixture of uses in a pedestrian-oriented setting of moderate intensity. The district encourages the reuse of existing buildings that contribute to the unique character or history of the area. The standards also encourage high quality design, mixed use development, the use of public transit, and development that complements adjacent neighborhoods.

Before any area can be included in a PED zoning district, the Charlotte Zoning Ordinance states that a Streetscape Plan (known as a Pedscape Plan in this document) must be developed with specific boundaries, and adopted by the Charlotte City Council. The Pedscape Plan is a Concept Plan, and does not in and of itself rezone the property. Once it is adopted, the area can be rezoned to include the PED overlay through the normal rezoning process, with individual property owners receiving notifications of all public meetings regarding the rezoning.

The basic PED zoning requirements include a set of development and design standards that will apply to all areas where this new zoning district is approved. However, City Council recognized that each area will have unique characteristics that cannot be addressed by common standards. These include setbacks and streetscape requirements. As previously noted, these will be set forth in the Pedscape Plan for the particular area.

The Plaza-Central area is one of several neighborhoods in Charlotte where the PED district is under consideration. The first pilot Pedscape Plan was prepared in the East Boulevard area, which now has been adopted and rezoned as the first PED Overlay district.

There have been a number of studies and plans for the Plaza-Central area over the past few decades.

- A 1980 plan dealt with land use and parking issues leading up to the Independence Boulevard reconstruction as an expressway.
- In 1987, a Plaza-Central Business District Area Plan proposed ambitious pedestrian-oriented redevelopment in a superblock pattern, which did not materialize. A companion Plaza-Central Special Project Plan, which summarized the Area Plan, was adopted by City Council in November 1987.
- An urban design plan addressing specific streetscape improvements for the area was completed in 1990, with funding through the City's Business Corridor Revitalization program. Some oversized aboveground planters along Central Avenue at the district core were removed, and new decorative street lighting and brick sidewalks and crosswalks were installed.
- In 1998, the Plaza Central Revitalization Study included a series of design charrettes by outside consultants. It provided a new vision for the Plaza-Central area in keeping with the existing traditional city block pattern. The Pedestrian Overlay District is a follow-through on that plan.

- Beginning in 2002, several community meetings were held to create and refine specific proposals for the Pedscape plan, building directly on the 1998 study. This plan has been prepared with the assistance of City staff from a variety of departments and disciplines, and with the input from district businesses and property owners, as well as area residents.

2. Historical Background

The Central Avenue commercial area had its beginnings in the pre-automobile era. The City's major business and residential center had evolved at the intersection of Trade and Tryon Streets. As the City grew in the early 1900's, several Charlotte neighborhoods developed along streetcar commuter connections extending south and west from downtown. These included Dilworth, Myers Park, and Elizabeth. Similar residential development was undertaken to follow a streetcar line running eastward from downtown. This line ran on Central Avenue (originally Lawyers Road) turning northward onto The Plaza.



Cole Manufacturing Company building



Variety of home sizes along The Plaza

However, the busy Seaboard Railroad line (now the CSX line) ran at grade between the City and the new easterly development. The at-grade crossing severely compromised streetcar service to the area, slowing growth. At least a dozen separate projects were undertaken over time targeting different income levels. Even so, the street network generally evolved in a logical and interconnected manner. The establishment of the Charlotte Country Club around 1910 aided development of the area, although the streetcar line never extended to reach it.

In the meantime, industrial development was underway along the railroad track in an area known as Oakhurst. Large loft buildings including a casket company, cotton milling concerns and farm implement production were built in the area of Central Avenue and Louise Street, beginning about 1900. Factory owners lived in fine homes nearby. Adjacent land was developed with small cottages for factory workers.

The result of the different development initiatives was a wide diversity of economic groups and housing sizes in the general area. Lewis Long's grocery store was established at Central and Pecan in 1916 in a simple two-story brick building to serve streetcar commuters and factory workers. It was directly surrounded by houses for 20 years.



Smaller home sizes on Hamorton Place

By 1938, streetcar service in Charlotte ended, and the automobile era was well underway. Freed from the constraints of poor streetcar service, the easterly residential areas filled in and extended. W.T. Harris opened his first grocery, precursor of the Harris Teeter chain, at 1504 Central. The Pure Oil service station at Central and Pecan was designed to look like a Tudor cottage as part of the company's national policy to fit its station designs into its residential neighborhoods. The Dairy Queen store is a prototype and surviving example of early automobile-oriented design. It was during this period that the Central Avenue commercial area grew to be one of the largest such centers in the City, referred to as the "Miracle Mile," and serving a wider area of seamlessly connected residential development including neighborhoods now known as Elizabeth, Chantilly, Belmont, Commonwealth-Morningside, and Plaza-Midwood.



Commercial buildings at Central and Pecan Avenues dating from the 1930's and '40's



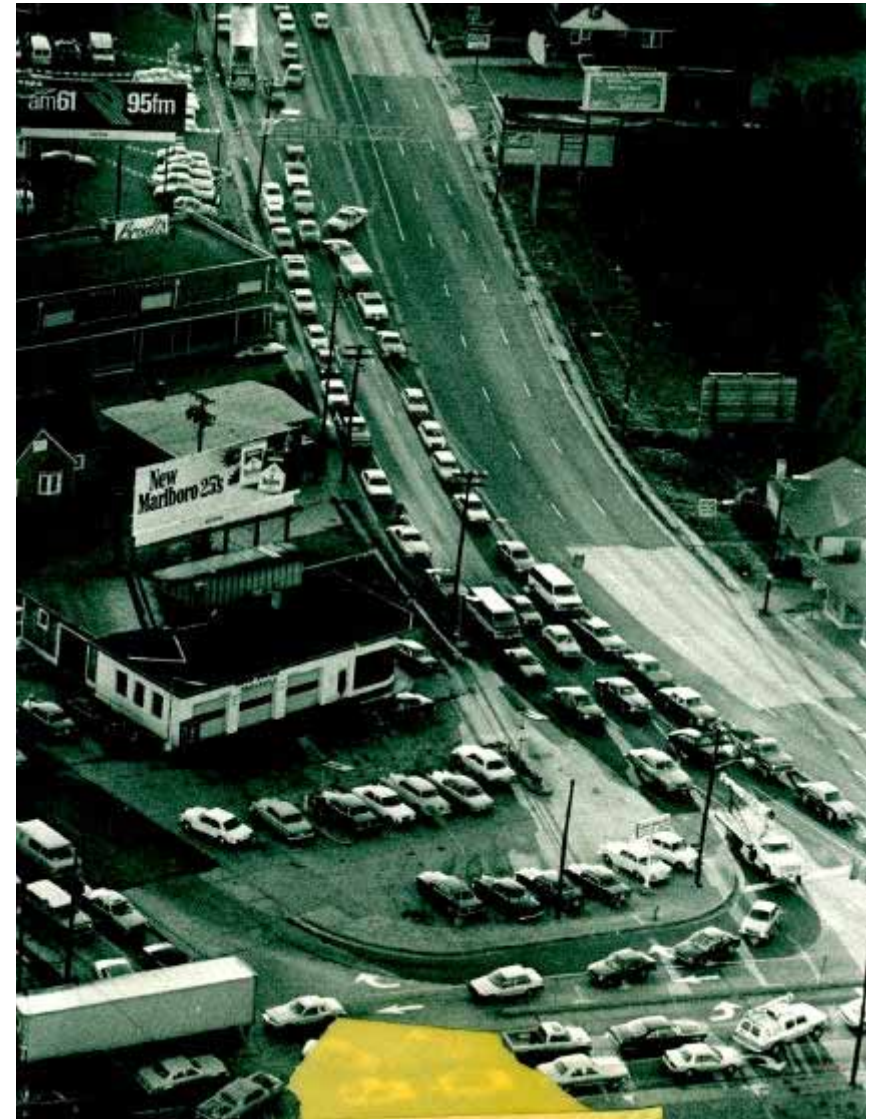
Pure Oil service station on Central Avenue, now Fuel Pizza



Dairy Queen store on Central Avenue is prototype of early automobile-oriented design

Independence Boulevard was constructed beginning in 1946 just south of the Central Avenue commercial area. It was originally a wide boulevard with frequent cross-street connections, but eventually became extremely congested with commuter traffic from outlying areas. The intense traffic flow discouraged crossing between Central Avenue and the Chantilly and Elizabeth areas.

The mid-1950's marks the high-water mark in development of the Central Avenue commercial area. In 1956, the Park Road shopping center opened across town as the first suburban shopping center in Charlotte with anchor stores and plentiful parking in front. This form was quickly adopted throughout the City, eclipsing downtown as well as the old streetcar commercial strips as shopping destinations. Since then, there have been small-scale attempts to emulate the suburban shopping center model along Central Avenue, with limited success.



Independence Boulevard and Pecan Avenue in a 1985 Charlotte Observer photo



Small suburban-style shopping center, The Plaza and Central Avenue

As automobile-dependent residential development extended further and further, inner suburbs became increasingly less fashionable. In 1960, Charlotte adopted its first comprehensive zoning ordinance. It was assumed that the City's streetcar suburbs had no future in the automobile age. Large areas around Central Avenue were rezoned for office and multi-family use. Through the 1960's as original property owners aged, speculators bought property for low-end rental, demolition, and haphazard redevelopment. A period of decline ensued.

In the 1970's there was renewed interest in the area from younger families attracted by solid affordable housing and closeness to downtown jobs. Eventually, grassroots support convinced City Council to "downzone" much of the area back to single-family residential use in order to forestall the inappropriate infill development. Other assistance and loan fund programs also were brought to bear to encourage area revitalization. It was in this period that the name "Plaza Midwood" came into use for the larger neighborhood.

Independence Boulevard was rebuilt as an expressway in the late 1980's. While this relieved some severe regional transportation problems, it also bisected neighborhoods, compromised access to

properties formerly fronting on Independence, and severed many direct physical connections to the south. Hawthorne Lane and Pecan Avenue became the only streets connecting under the expressway, which did provide an uncongested route to Elizabeth and Chantilly.

In recent years, revival in Charlotte's Center City and the emergence of a strong residential market at the City core has reenergized many of the old neighborhoods close by. Neighborhoods such as Plaza Midwood and adjoining Commonwealth-Morningside have continued revitalization, and emerged as safe, attractive, and sought-after residential areas.

The commercial center serving the surrounding neighborhoods is focused along Central Avenue, but widens back to Commonwealth Avenue to encompass a larger district in the vicinity of The Plaza and Pecan Avenue. It has become known as "Plaza-Central" because of one of its prime intersections, and also to distinguish it from the much larger Plaza-Midwood residential area it adjoins. The prospects for Plaza-Central have risen with its residential surroundings.



District extends south of Central Avenue

Part II: EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Description of the District

The Plaza-Central District is the commercial core area adjacent to the Plaza-Midwood and Commonwealth-Morningside neighborhoods. It serves these as well as other surrounding neighborhoods, like Belmont, Chantilly, and Elizabeth. The boundary for the proposed Pedestrian Overlay District is based on existing zoning boundaries. It was drawn to include all of the parcels fronting on Central Avenue from its intersection with Independence Boulevard to Nandina Street, and other parcels currently zoned for business, office, or mixed-use in immediate proximity. In addition, one area zoned industrial south and west of Pecan and Central was included in the district. As such, in the section from the CSX Railroad crossing to Nandina Street, the District extends from parts of Hamorton Place southward to East Independence Boulevard, taking in sections of Pecan, Gordon, Thomas, The Plaza, Nandina, McClintock, and Commonwealth.

The district extends about one mile in length, and encompasses about 83 net acres (excluding right-of-way.) The maps that follow show the study area boundaries more precisely.



House in commercial use at west end of district dates to 1900



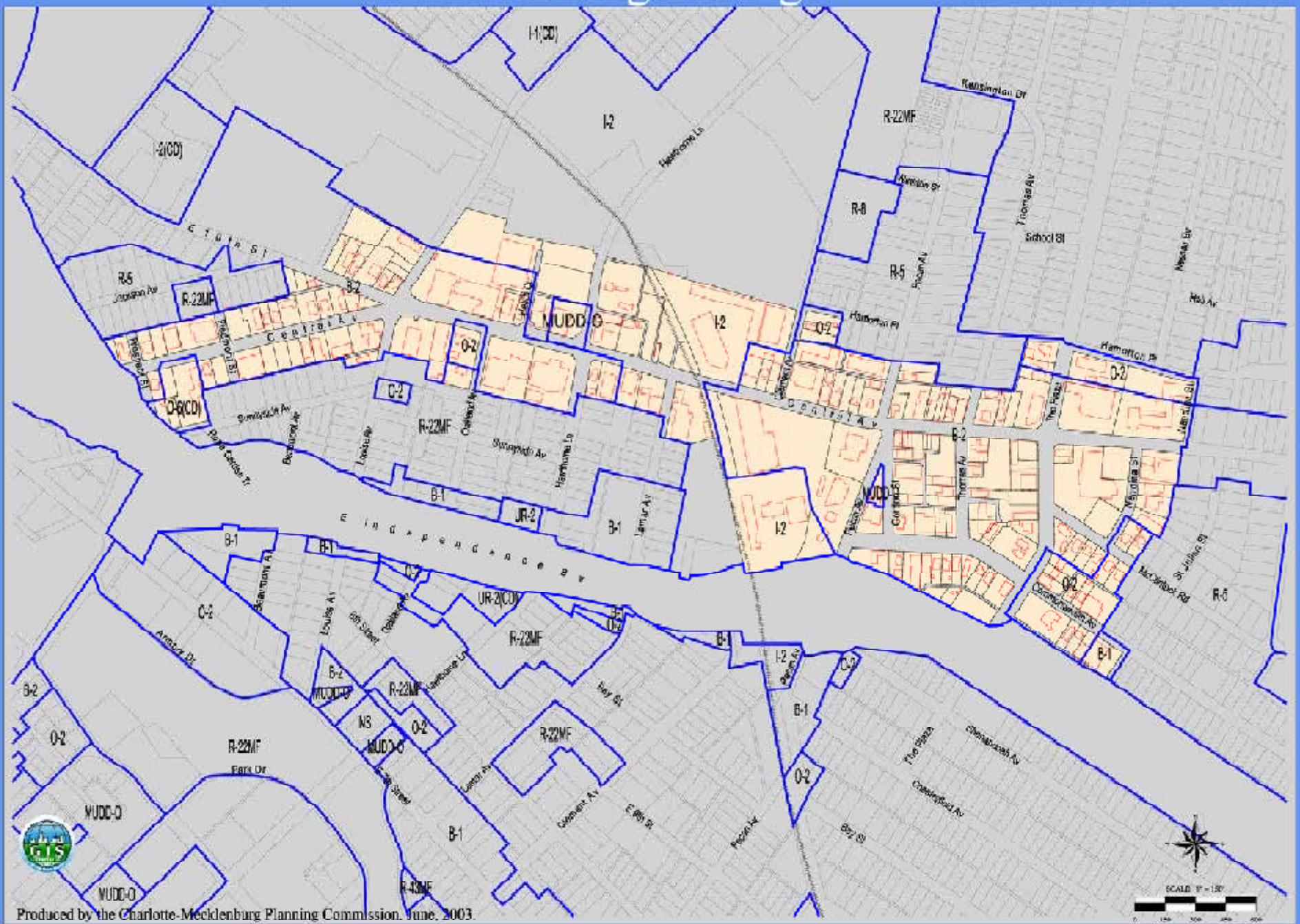
Mixed commercial and warehouse uses at east end of district

2. Existing Zoning

Map 1 shows that properties within the Plaza Central PED boundary are primarily zoned B-2 General Business. There are areas of I-2 General Industrial and O-2 Office, and small areas of B-1 Neighborhood Business, MUDD-O Mixed Use Development, O-6 (CD) Office Conditional, and R-22MF multifamily residential. Zoning provides regulations for how land may be used and the form of development that may be allowed on a given piece of property. The uses allowed in the current underlying zoning district classifications will not change after PED is applied (with certain limited exceptions such as exclusion of drive-thru windows for retail uses). However, the development standards- including setbacks- will change. The minimum setbacks allowed under the predominant underlying B-2, I-2, and O-2 zoning districts are 20 feet from the back of the public right-of-way.

Map 1

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Existing Zoning



Produced by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, June, 2003

Following is a summary of Zoning within the Plaza-Central District:

	Land Area	
B-2 General Business:	55.7 ac	67%
I-2 General Industrial:	17.9	22%
O-2 Office	6.3	8%
B-1 Neighborhood Business	0.5	1%
MUDD-O Mixed Use Development	0.9	1%
O-6 Office	1.2	1%
R-22MF	<u>0.3</u>	<u>0%</u>
	82.8 ac	100%

- *B-2 General Business* zoning is intended to create and protect business areas for the retailing of merchandise and the provision of professional and business services. The district generally is located adjacent to major thoroughfares. A wide variety of retail and office uses are allowed in this district, including many automobile-related retail and repair uses. Single- and multi-family residential uses up to 22 units per acre also are allowed. This is the predominant zoning classification in the Plaza-Central District.
- *I-2 General Industrial* zoning is intended to create and protect wholesaling and industrial areas for manufacturing, distribution, and transportation, and a broad variety of specialized industrial opera-



Pharmacy in B-2 General Business district built in 2000

tions. Office and retail uses of limited size are allowed, but residential uses are not allowed. There is a considerable area of I-2 zoning in the Plaza-Central District along the CSX Railroad line.

- *O-2 Office* zoning is intended to provide areas for offices, institutions, and commercial activities not involving the sale of merchandise. Single- and multi-family residential uses up to 22 units per acre also are allowed. There are scattered areas of O-2 zoning in the Plaza-Central District.
- *R-22MF Multi-family residential* zoning is intended to protect and promote development of a variety of housing types, including apartments, condominiums, and other forms of attached housing, at densities up to 22 units per acre. The Plaza-Central District includes only a portion of one lot, most of which is zoned O-2 Office, which is zoned R-22MF.
- *B-1 Neighborhood Business* zoning is to provide business centers for retailing and professional services, intended for the convenience of nearby residential areas. Fewer office and retail uses are allowed than in B-2. Certain automobile-related uses in particular are excluded. Single- and multi-family residential uses up to 22 units per acre also are allowed. Only one small area zoned B-1 is in the district.



Warehouse in I-2 General Industrial district.



Credit Union office in Commonwealth Avenue O-2 Office district

- *MUDD-O Mixed Use Development District (Optional)* zoning is intended to provide for coordinated mixed-use development with a strong emphasis on pedestrian scale, urban development and amenities. The Optional provision is a process that addresses new development concepts, innovative design, special problems, and other unique circumstances. A few parcels of MUDD-O are in the general boundary of the Plaza-Central District. They are subject to MUDD zoning requirements, and technically are not included in the PED overlay district.
- *O-6 (CD) Office Conditional* is a zoning category replaced in the current zoning ordinance by the O-2 district. There is one small area of O-6 (CD) zoning with specific recorded site plan conditions still in effect, at the western end of the district.

There is a designated local Historic District in the Plaza-Midwood area. A small portion of the Plaza-Central District on Clement Avenue and the Plaza along Hamorton Place, is included within the local Historic District. These local Historic Districts function as local overlay zoning districts, with the requirements established by the Charlotte

Historic District Commission. Historic District guidelines do not deal with issues of land use, but with matters of design for the preservation of historic character of the district. Within this area and any future additions to any Historic District, the minimum PED and Pedscape Plan standards would still apply in full. The Historic District Commission may increase requirements beyond the minimum PED and Pedscape standards.

3. Existing Land Use

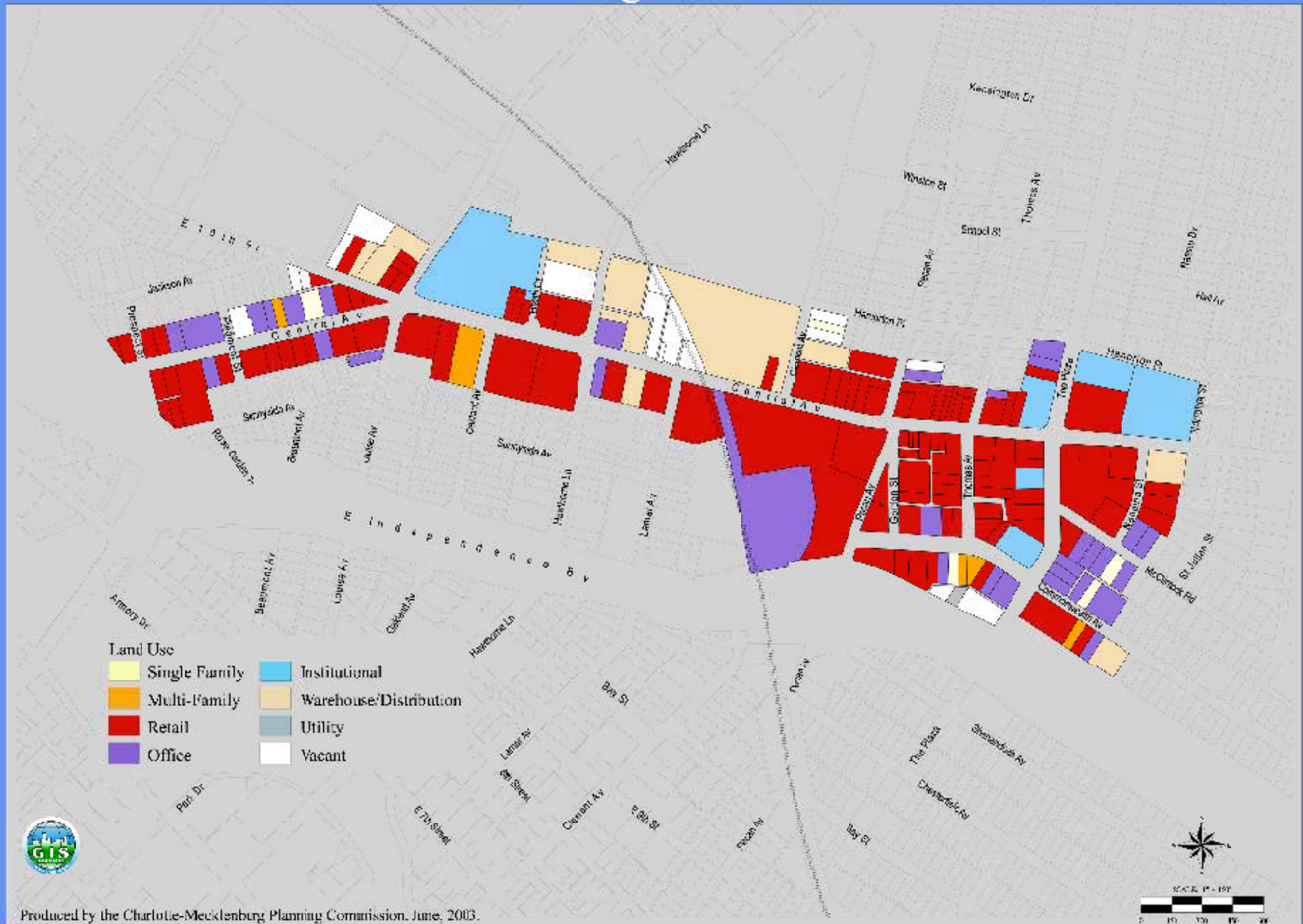
Map 2 shows the current land uses of properties in the Plaza-Central Pedscape Plan area. The current land use is the way in which a given property is *actually* developed. Because of historical circumstances, this often differs from what is *proposed* in the land use plan or the use for which a property is *zoned*. Current land uses in the area consist primarily of commercial/retail uses, with some warehouse and industrial uses, offices, and institutional uses (library, church, post office, and school). The area abuts residential neighborhoods on several sides, but the Pedscape Plan area includes only scattered single- and multi-family dwellings. Current land uses help determine the character of the corridor and influence the type of land uses that may be appropriate in the Pedscape Plan area in the future.

The building and land areas of existing uses in the Plaza-Central District are summarized as follows:

	<u>Building Area</u>		<u>Land Area</u>	
Commercial/Retail:	551,900 sf	52%	41.8 ac	50%
Institutional	184,582	17%	10.3	12%
Warehouse/Industrial	152,286	16%	12.9	16%
Office	141,325	13%	10.4	13%
Multi-family Residential	15,844	2%	1.6	2%
Single-family Residential	8,918	1%	1.1	1%
Vacant Land	0	0%	4.7	6%
	1,054,855 sf	100%	82.8 ac	100%

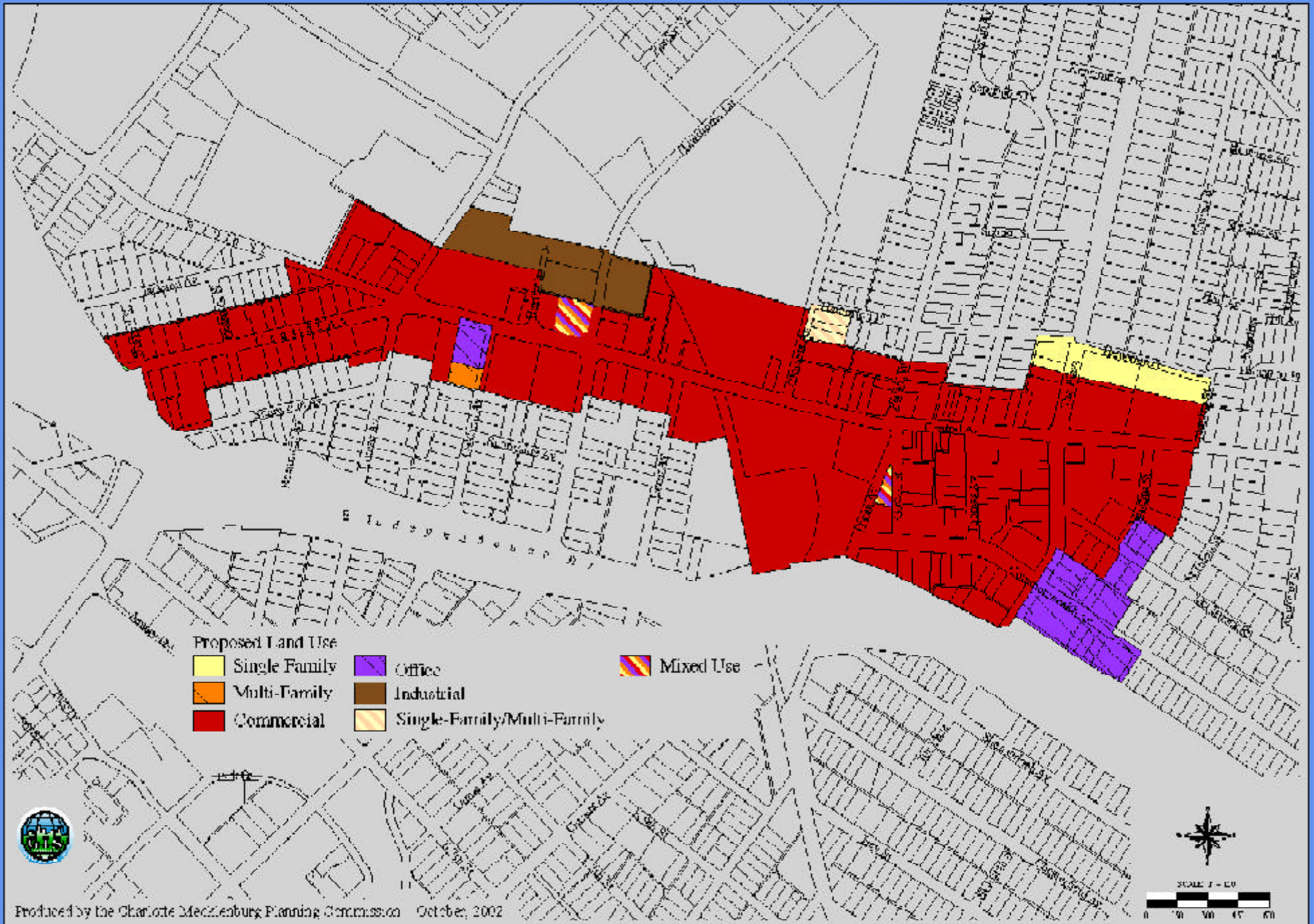
Map 2

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Existing Land Use



Map 3

Plaza-Central Pedscape Plan Central District Plan Land Use





Former church rezoned MUDD-O for commercial reuse

4. Current Land Use Plan

The Central District Plan (1993) is the governing land use policy document for the Plaza-Central District. The Land Uses proposed in that plan are shown on Map 3.

- The plan calls for undifferentiated retail/commercial use throughout the district except for some areas along the perimeter.
- Portions of the district in the southeast corner along Commonwealth Avenue and McClintock Road are designated for office use as a transition to the adjoining single-family residential areas in the Commonwealth Morningside neighborhood.
- A section of the district along Hamorton Place east of The Plaza extending to Nandina Street is shown as single-family residential, although it is occupied by a church and school. Southwest of that intersection is a small section shown as single-family residential but zoned as office.

- At the southwest corner of Hamorton Place and Clement Avenue is an area shown for multi-family residential.
- At the southwest corner of Central Avenue and Oakland Avenue, the property currently in multi-family residential use is shown split between office and high density multi-family.
- A portion of the district's industrially zoned property along Hawthorne Lane and Louise Avenue is shown as industrial, although all of the Central Avenue frontage is retail/commercial.

The land use vision for the Plaza-Central District is somewhat different from what was proposed in the *Central District Plan*. This is discussed in the "Recommended Land Uses" section of this document.

5. Community Design

Building forms in the Plaza-Central District reflect all of the changes that have occurred over the past century. There are large old houses and old factory loft buildings (some converted to commercial uses); early commercial structures built along the public sidewalk dating from the earlier pedestrian and streetcar eras; and several generations of automobile-oriented buildings with ever-increasing parking lots. Central Avenue now carries two lanes of traffic in each direction, which has eliminated on-street parking except during off-peak weekend hours. The overall result is a haphazard arrangement that is difficult for pedestrians as well as for those in cars seeking to make multiple stops. As such, the district has less synergy than it might if adjoining properties fit together better.

6. Transportation Systems

The origin of the Plaza-Central street network was based on its function as a streetcar corridor. As discussed in the preceding sections, events have transpired which have altered the functionality of transportation systems to and through the area.

Street Network

On the east end of the district, the residential neighborhoods bordering the Plaza-Central district generally have a very complete network of streets, which allows for multiple means of access for pedestrians, cyclists, and automobiles on the east end of the district. The grid network also disperses traffic because of the various routes drivers can take, which results in decreased automobile congestion.

The continuity of the grid system is severed by the CSX Railroad tracks. West of the tracks, Central Avenue is more of a strip. The Sunnyside section of Elizabeth is further isolated by the Independence expressway and is accessible mainly from Central Avenue. To the north, in the vicinity of Hawthorne Lane and Louise Avenue, a large older industrial area separates the Central Avenue strip from the Belmont neighborhood.



Central Avenue is a Major Thoroughfare with two lanes of traffic in each direction



Thoroughfare Status

The Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) classifies streets within the region in its official *Thoroughfare Plan*.

- *Major Thoroughfares* are the primary traffic arteries of the area. Their main function is to accommodate large volumes of traffic at moderate speeds and provide access to major commercial, residential and institutional land uses. Within the Plaza-Central District, Central Avenue and the portion of Hawthorne Lane south of Central Avenue are so classified.
- *Minor Thoroughfares* are lesser traffic arteries, differentiated from Major Thoroughfares mainly by the smaller volume of traffic served. They serve moderate volumes of traffic at moderate speed, but generally require only a single lane of traffic in each direction. The Plaza and Hawthorne Lane are Minor Thoroughfares north of Central Avenue only, as is Tenth Street west of its intersection with Central and Louise Avenues.
- *Collector Streets* are roadways that assemble traffic from local streets and distribute them onto thoroughfares. They are designed for low to moderate traffic volumes at low to moderate speeds, and generally require only a single travel lane in each direction.

Commonwealth and Thomas Avenues are so classified, as are Pecan Avenue and The Plaza south of Central Avenue, and Louise Avenue north of Central.

- *Local Streets* are two-lane roadways that provide access to individual properties. They are for low volume traffic at low speeds, and generally are not intended as access to schools, large parks, public facilities, or other high-volume destinations. While most streets in the Plaza-Midwood grid system serve some collector function, the streets not named above are classified as local streets.

Traffic Volumes

Automobile traffic volumes provide a picture of the demand for existing road capacity. Traffic volumes in the Plaza-Central District have fluctuated up and down over the past ten years. Following are the latest traffic volume counts for streets within the area:

<u>Traffic Count Location</u>	<u>Avg. Daily Volume (year)</u>
<i>Central Avenue</i> north of 7th Street	21,000 (2000)
<i>Central Avenue</i> west of Hawthorne Lane	33,300 (2003)
<i>Central Avenue</i> east of Hawthorne Lane	27,200 (2003)
<i>Central Avenue</i> west of Firth Street	19,500 (2003)
<i>Tenth Street</i> east of Seigle Avenue	11,600 (2000)
<i>Hawthorne Lane</i> north of Central Avenue	9,200 (2003)
<i>The Plaza</i> south of Chestnut Avenue	13,000 (2003)

The work currently in progress to extend Independence Boulevard as a limited access expressway is expected to increase Central Avenue traffic by 3.5% to 4% over the next few years. However, when Independence Boulevard construction is complete, the volume through Plaza-Central should return to current levels. The volumes indicate that the current lane capacity of district streets can manage the current and projected automobile traffic demand.

Pedestrian Facilities and Activity

Pedestrian traffic volume counts are not maintained by the City of Charlotte, but from observation and experience it is evident that the



Brick sidewalks, crosswalks, and decorative pedestrian-scaled streetlights on Central Avenue between Pecan and The Plaza

commercial area between Pecan Avenue and The Plaza is the portion of the study area with the greatest pedestrian activity because of the proximity of store entrances to the sidewalk and to each other, and the absence of intruding parking lots. Residents of the surrounding neighborhoods access these businesses on foot. Other pedestrians arrive by the heavily used bus routes. Because of the relative density of businesses in this section, customers who arrive by car can park in one location and walk to other nearby shops or offices, although availability of parking spaces not controlled by a single merchant limits this option.

Some of the major existing features of the pedestrian transportation network on the corridor include:

- *Sidewalks:* Sidewalks exist throughout the district including the side streets, with a few small gaps. Most of the sidewalks are 5 to 6 feet wide. In the two-block section of Central Avenue from Pecan Avenue to The Plaza, sidewalk widths range from 10 to 13 feet. This two-block area also has brick sidewalks, brick crosswalks, and decorative pedestrian-scaled streetlights.



Planting strips, sidewalks, and front setbacks along Commonwealth Avenue are compromised

- ***Cross walks/Pedestrian Signals:*** At the intersections of Central Avenue with The Plaza, Thomas Avenue, and Pecan Avenue, there are traffic signals and brick crosswalks in all directions. At the intersection of Central Avenue with Hawthorne Lane and Louise Avenue/Tenth Street, there are traffic signals and painted crosswalks. The stretch of Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and Hawthorne Lane is notably lacking in pedestrian crossing opportunities. Other intersections in the district are controlled only by stop signs, and are generally without marked crosswalks.
- ***ADA/Curb Ramps:*** Ramps exist at most intersections. At some corners, the ramps were built with a single ramp leading diagonally into the intersection rather than with the preferred separate ramps leading across each street.
- ***Planting Strips:*** Grass or landscaped areas between the sidewalk and curb are intended to provide areas for tree planting and to give pedestrians extra distance from vehicle travel lanes. Along



Planting strips in high pedestrian areas tend to be worn

Central Avenue, they are present only sporadically from the west end of the study area to Pecan Avenue. On Central Avenue east of Pecan Avenue, they are absent entirely. On Commonwealth Avenue, they are paved over or otherwise compromised. Most of the other streets in the district have planting strips, although some are quite narrow. In areas of high pedestrian volume, the planting strips tend to be in poor condition from pedestrian wear.

Charlotte Department of Transportation tracks crashes involving motor vehicles throughout the city, and their statistics for the last three years reveal an area of concern for the pedestrian and bicycle environment in the Plaza-Central District. A total of 14 pedestrian or bicycle accidents have been reported since 1998. Of these, eight (all pedestrian) occurred on Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and The Plaza. The other six (2 pedestrian, 4 bicycle) were on the blocks of Central to the west. There were no pedestrian or bicycle related accidents in the southern section of the district.

Transit Service

Four Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) bus routes provide service within Plaza-Central:

- *Route 9* (Central Ave./Windsor Park) travels from Uptown along Central Ave., past Eastland Mall, to Albemarle Road to the Lawyers/Harris/Idlewild area. It runs about 6 times per hour in each direction, and at less than 5-minute intervals during rush hour. This route averages 112,514 riders per month (by far the highest ridership of 35 local bus routes).
- *Route 17* (Commonwealth Ave.) travels from Uptown along Central Ave., at Thomas Ave. shifting onto Commonwealth Avenue, and finally south on Independence Boulevard to Sardis Road North. It runs about twice per hour. This route averages 36,619 riders per month (11th in ridership in the system).
- *Route 39* (UNC Charlotte/Uptown) travels from Uptown on Trade Street to Presbyterian Hospital; then along Hawthorne Lane to Central Avenue, to Eastway, and finally to UNC Charlotte. It runs about once to twice per hour. This route averages 31,868 riders per month (16th in ridership).
- *EZ Rider North* van service (Route 90) travels from Carolinas Medical Center and Presbyterian Hospital, coming from Kings Drive onto Central Avenue at the west end of the district briefly, then to Tenth Street, through the Belmont neighborhood, and northward to North Davidson and 36th Streets. It runs hourly in mid-morning and afternoon hours only. This route averages 891 riders per month.

Route 40X (Albemarle Road Express) provides rush hour service from Mint Hill and the Albemarle Road/Lawyers Road area into Uptown. Although it traverses Central Avenue, it does not stop to pick up passengers in the Plaza-Central district. With an average 7,617 riders per month, it is by far the most popular of 11 CATS express routes.



CATS bus on Thomas Avenue at Central

Bus Stops & Transit Amenities: There are about 16 bus stops in the study area on Central Avenue located at almost every cross street. A few more stops are on Thomas Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue. There are no bus shelters, but 4 benches: on the inbound side at Pecan Avenue, The Plaza, and Nandina Street, and the outbound side at Thomas Avenue.

A partial ride check in October 2001 revealed that the two most popular stops in the district were at Central and Pecan Avenues, and at Central and Piedmont Avenues. Both have over 70 boardings per day. Most of the stops in this segment of Central Avenue are heavily used, even in the outbound direction. CATS has installed updated bus stop signs and schedule information at these stops allowing people to check the bus schedule at the stops. New shelters will be installed at several of the inbound stops on this route segment.

Planned Improvements: A planned “skip-stop” service on Central Avenue will be initiated in the next two years servicing only the major stops between Eastland Mall and uptown, while the local bus continues to service every stop every 5 minutes or so.



Streetcar option for Central Avenue

CATS is studying rapid transit options for the Southeast Transit corridor. The bus rapid transit or light rail system is intended to run primarily on Independence Boulevard. The intersection with Pecan Avenue at the edge of the Plaza-Central District is a potential transit station location.

As a part of the CATS system planning, a streetcar line has been recommended to extend from Uptown Charlotte to Eastland Mall. The proposed route would come from the Presbyterian Hospital area in Elizabeth along Hawthorne Lane, and then move straight through the Plaza-Central District on Central Avenue. Vehicles would move on fixed rails in the outer lanes of Central Avenue, sharing the lanes with other vehicles. They would be powered by electric lines suspended overhead. Required lane widths are expected to be unchanged from current dimensions.



Bicycle rack at Plaza-Midwood Library

Bicycle Facilities

There are no specific bicycle routes on the roads in Plaza-Central. Central Avenue has narrow vehicular lanes, and is heavily congested. It is rated on the Mecklenburg/Union Metropolitan Planning Organization's Bicycle Suitability Map as requiring extreme caution, for use only by very experienced bicyclists. The grid network of streets in the eastern portion of Plaza-Central provides for parallel routes on residential streets. West of the railroad tracks, parallel routes are discontinuous.

The *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Bicycle Transportation Plan* recommends bike lanes through the district on Commonwealth Avenue, and connecting to the south on Pecan Avenue. There also have been recent discussions of a signed bike route along Thomas Avenue extending north from Central Avenue into the Plaza-Midwood neighborhood. Thomas Avenue, which is signalized, is considered a preferable alternative for neighborhood cycling over The Plaza, which has relatively heavy traffic and narrow lanes.

The Bicycle Transportation Plan also recommends that bicycle facilities (bicycle lanes or wide outside lanes) be included in plans for future road improvements, where possible and appropriate.

Part III: VISION PLAN & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Plan Development Process

The Pedscape Plan is a follow-up from the 1998 Plaza Central Revitalization Study. During this study process, a series of design charrettes led by outside consultants included residents, property owners, business owners, and developers, and an interdepartmental team of City staff. The study resulted in a new vision for the Plaza-Central area in keeping with the existing traditional city block pattern. Beginning in fall 2002, additional public meetings were held to flesh out the specifics of the Pedscape Plan.

2. Vision for the District

The overall vision for the area is to create a vibrant mixed use district, primarily serving the neighborhoods surrounding the Plaza-Central District, and to become a model of realizing a historic way of living while protecting what is special about the area.

The approach to the vision is:

- *New development* in this area *should not destroy* or detract from the human scale and fabric of the area
- Specifically, existing *historic retail space and building forms* along Central Avenue should be protected.
- *Non-historical* and inefficient properties on the perimeter should be enhanced by *redevelopment* and re-merchandising to create vibrant retail streets.

The following elements further articulate the vision for the corridor:

- *Trees and pedestrian activity* will define the corridor.
- *Aesthetic improvements and new amenities* will enhance the pedestrian environment.
- *A range of transportation choices* and safe environment for pedestrians will result from slow-moving cars, on-street parking spaces, provisions for cyclists, streetcar stops, and a rapid transit station.
- *Outdoor commercial activity* such as sidewalk cafes and merchandising will be a defining element of the retail section of the district.
- *A variety of pedestrian oriented building types* will honor the historic fabric. Entrances will be from sidewalks rather than from parking lots. Existing historic buildings will be preserved. New development will include low-rise and mid-rise buildings, higher-density housing, and street-level stores.



Private investment in revitalizing an existing building on Pecan Avenue

3. Key Concepts

Based on the foregoing existing conditions and vision statements, a number of Key Concepts for the Plaza-Central District have been identified. These are depicted on Map 4.

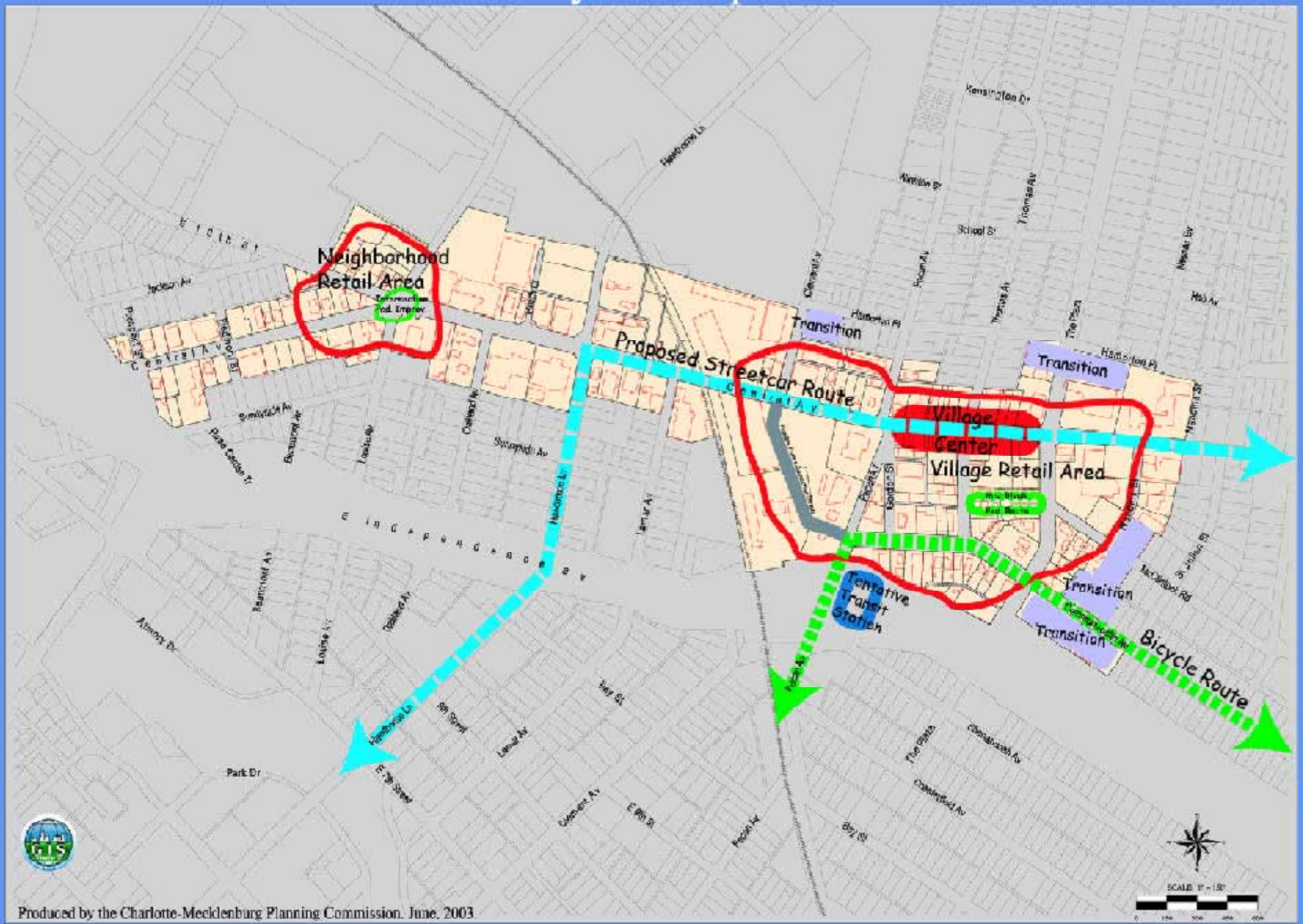
- *Village Center*: The two-block section of Central Avenue between The Plaza and Pecan Avenue is the heart of the district. Preservation of its historic character is a priority.
- *Village Retail Area*: The larger area east of the CSX railroad tracks has the potential to be a highly walkable compact mixed-use retail village.
- *Midblock Pedestrian Route*: A pedestrian pathway from Thomas Avenue to The Plaza just north of Commonwealth Avenue is proposed. This pathway, lighted, landscaped, and connected to internal parking lots, will help tie the district together.
- *Possible Future Connection Street*: A new street connection is proposed, extending Commonwealth Avenue to Clement Avenue at Central Avenue. This new street would expand the street grid while improving access to the large property affected.
- *Transitions to residential areas*: A step-down in intensity of retail uses immediately adjacent to single family residential areas will help both areas to be good neighbors. The existing zoning classifications at the northeast and southeast corners of the district provide for this step-down.
- *Neighborhood Retail Area*: The area immediately surrounding the Central Five Points Intersection is a second retail node needed for support of adjoining residential neighborhoods.
- *Central Five Points Improvement*: The Central Avenue/Louise Avenue/Tenth Street intersection is a particularly difficult pedestrian location. It is an important gateway and neighborhood access point, in need of aesthetic and functional improvement.



- *Proposed Streetcar Route*: The streetcar line from downtown will travel through most of the district. The tracks running in the outside traffic lanes of Central Avenue will have an impact on the form of the area, while providing a key transportation alternative.
- *Tentative Transit Station*: Independence Boulevard at Pecan Avenue has been tentatively identified as a rapid transit station for the CATS southeast transit line. Regional transit access will make Plaza-Central an ideal location for transit oriented development.
- *Bicycle route*: A regional bike route has been identified along Commonwealth Avenue, turning south on Pecan Avenue. This is an important factor for the design of Commonwealth Avenue. Further extensions of the bike route system, to the extent possible, are important to members of the community.

Map 4

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Key Concepts



4. Recommended Land Uses

The land use vision for the Plaza-Central District is somewhat different from what was proposed in the *Central District Plan*, which called for undifferentiated retail/commercial use throughout the entire district except for some areas along the perimeter. This *Pedscape Plan* recommends a number of changes to the proposed land uses. The changes are generally consistent with existing land uses and the intent of the Pedestrian Overlay District. The recommended land uses, as shown on Map 5, are as follows:

- The bulk of the district east of the railroad tracks is recommended for Retail Mixed-use, including office and residential uses as well as retail and restaurant use. New development or redevelopment of any one or more of these uses would be permitted.
- A second node of Retail Mixed-use is recommended at the Central Five Points intersection (at Tenth Street and Louise Avenue) to serve neighborhood shopping needs. New development of any one or more of retail, restaurant, office, and/or residential uses would be permitted.
- The portion of the district extending between these two Retail Mixed-use Nodes, generally from Louise Avenue to the railroad track and Clement Street, is recommended for Office Mixed-use. As larger new development occurs, this plan recommends that office and residential uses predominate, with retail and restaurant uses on the ground floors. Existing smaller retail properties would remain. This portion includes all of the land within the district currently zoned I-2 Industrial.
- The portions of the district on Central Avenue west of the Central Five Points Retail Mixed-use area is recommended for Office Mixed-use. This particular area has wide building setbacks, trees, and a residential feeling not conducive to intensive retail use. Again, appropriate uses are offices and residential, with retail and restaurants permitted on the ground floors.

- Portions of the district in the southeast corner along Commonwealth Avenue and McClintock Road designated for office use are recommended for Office Mixed-use, with a mix of residential, and limited retail also permitted. This is intended as a transition to the adjoining single-family residential areas in the Commonwealth Morningside neighborhood.
- A section of the district along Hamorton Place east of The Plaza extending to Nandina Street, previously was shown as single-family residential, but occupied by a church and school. These areas and the portion of the school property previously shown as commercial are now recommended for institutional use to reflect their present and anticipated continuing use.
- A small section southwest of Hamorton Place and The Plaza previously was shown as single-family residential, but zoned as office. This area is recommended for Office Mixed-use as a transition to the adjoining single-family residential to the north.

As authorized in the Pedestrian Overlay District section of the Zoning Ordinance, nightclubs, bars and lounges shall be allowed as a principal use, provided that they are located in an underlying zoning district that permits these uses and located at least 225' feet from a residential district (R-3, R-4, R-5, R-6, R-8, R-8MF, R-12MF, R-17MF, R-22MF, R-43MF, UR-1, UR-2, UR-3).

Most aspects of these land use recommendations either are consistent with existing underlying zoning, or are addressed through the establishment of the PED overlay itself. However, portions of the district are zoned I-2 for industrial uses. For the most part, these areas have transitioned to retail and office uses appropriate to the district. There remains potential for new incompatible uses unless the underlying industrial zoning is changed.

Rezoning recommendations are further defined in Part IV, the Implementation component of this report.

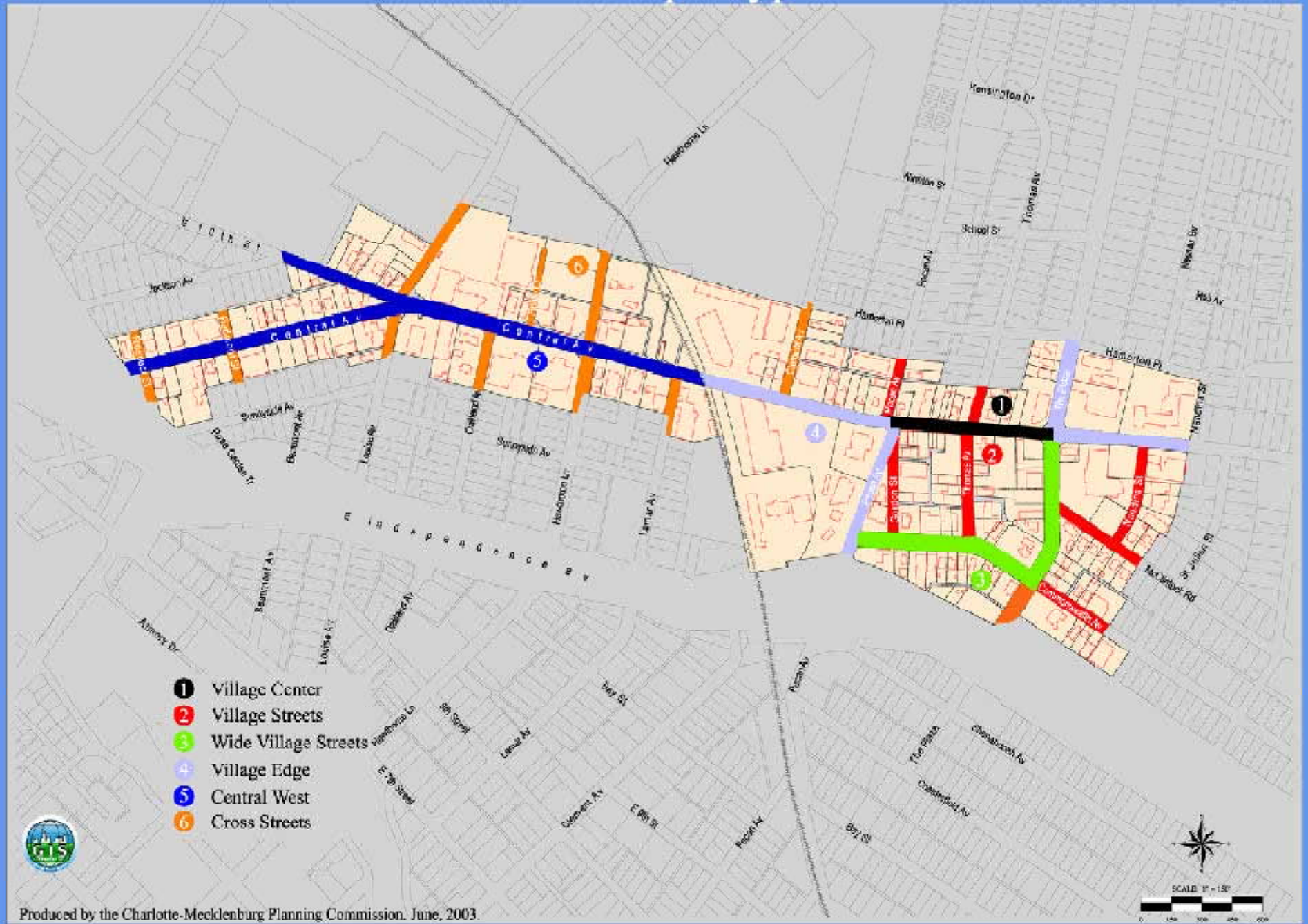
Map 5

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Recommended Land Use



Map 6

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Streetscape Types



5. Recommended Cross Sections and Streetscape Development Standards

The standards in this section supplement the requirements of the PED zoning. PED zoning refers to these streetscape standards for new development and changes to existing development. The Streetscape Development Standards are requirements for development that will be primarily the responsibility of private developers or private land owners to implement as property in the district is redeveloped or improved. In combination with the development requirements in the PED text, these standards will provide the primary mechanism for shaping the streetscape into the pedestrian-oriented environment envisioned for the corridor.

This section recommends future cross-sections for Central Avenue and other streets in the district, and identifies building setbacks and streetscape standards based on the ultimate curbline location. The cross-sections are not plans for immediate road improvements, but are recommended long-term changes to be considered for implementation once a major portion of the necessary right-of-way is available. In the meantime, City staff will request funding for minor improvements to the public right-of-way to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Building Setbacks and Future Street Cross-Sections

The building setback is one of the most important features in defining the character of a streetscape. Different land uses and different street characters require different setbacks. The building setback is defined in the PED standards as “the distance from the back of the roadway curb to the front of a building.” Where buildings are set back far from the street, there is a sense of openness, privacy, and in some cases grandeur. Shallower building setbacks, where buildings are closer to the sidewalk, can provide enclosure, intimacy, and opportunities for more interaction between the activity in the building and the people on the street.



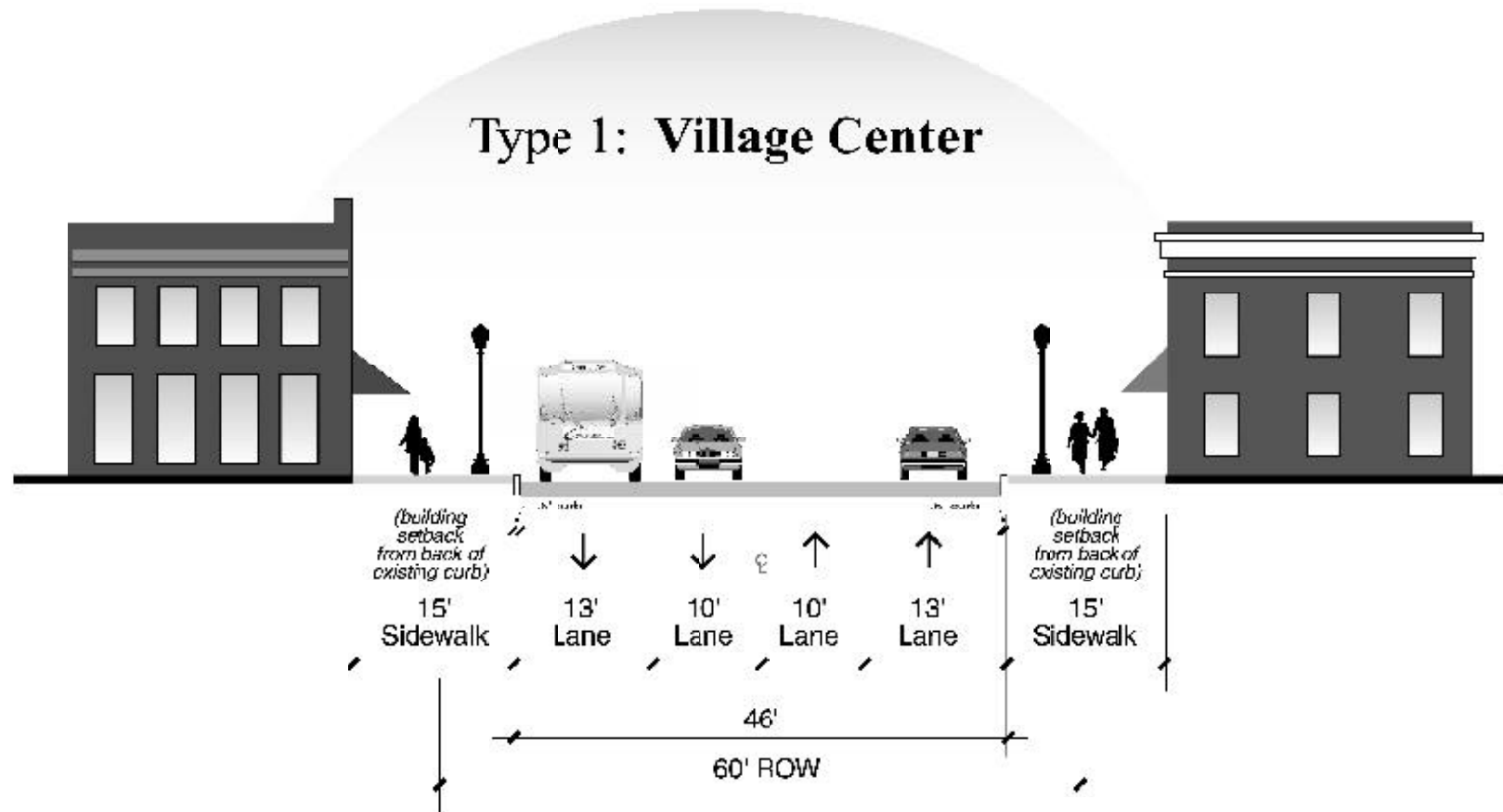
The PED text states: “The minimum setback will be measured from the back of all existing or future curbs, whichever is greater.” (Section 10.803.3) The setback area (located between the back of curb and the setback line) will include, at a minimum, the width needed for sidewalks and planting strips and any additional width that is deemed appropriate for the character of the streetscape. Standards for setbacks, sidewalks, and planting strips will be met by developers who undertake new development or major renovations in the area to be zoned PED.

The streets within the Plaza-Central District are categorized into six types, with setback and cross-section requirements established for each. The types are shown on Map 6.

For street frontages on streets along the perimeter the district, such as Sunnyside Avenue, Hamorton Place, and Nandina Street north of Central Avenue, setback requirements shall be in accordance with requirements for the underlying zoning district.

Tree planting requirements in this section supercede the “Perimeter Planting Requirements” in Section 21-13(C) of the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. However, all other requirements of the ordinance will apply to new development in the Plaza-Central Pedscape Plan area.

Figure 1



Type 1: Village Center

Central Avenue, from Pecan Avenue to The Plaza.

Situation: This street type is located in the heart of the Plaza-Central commercial area. It is the most tightly developed area, the most urban in character, and the area of most pedestrian activity due to its concentration of commercial uses. Most existing buildings have frontage directly at the sidewalk edge. There also are opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Although most existing buildings are single-story, multi-story mixed use structures would work well along this street type.

Parking and Planting: The existing roadway of the Type 1 portion of Central Avenue is insufficient for full-time on-street parking. In fact, full-time on-street parking was eliminated from this section many years ago to allow for widening of the sidewalk. The sidewalks are still relatively narrow, and are not sufficient to allow for planting of trees. Nonetheless, the historic urban form of this two-block section is highly regarded within the community, and is considered worthy of preservation.



Curblines: This plan maintains the existing curb location within the Type 1 section of Central Avenue, which is about 46 feet in width from back of curb to back of curb, varying slightly to allow for turning lane transitions. The streetcar line under consideration for Central Avenue would operate in a track in the existing outside (curb) lanes, and would not affect the road width.

Setbacks and Sidewalk: The minimum setback for this street type is 15 feet from the back of curb. However, for any new structure on a lot abutting an existing building at lesser setback, the minimum setback shall be the same as the abutting building. This is intended to maintain the continuous building frontage in those blocks where it already exists. The sidewalk is to extend from the back of curb to the minimum setback line.

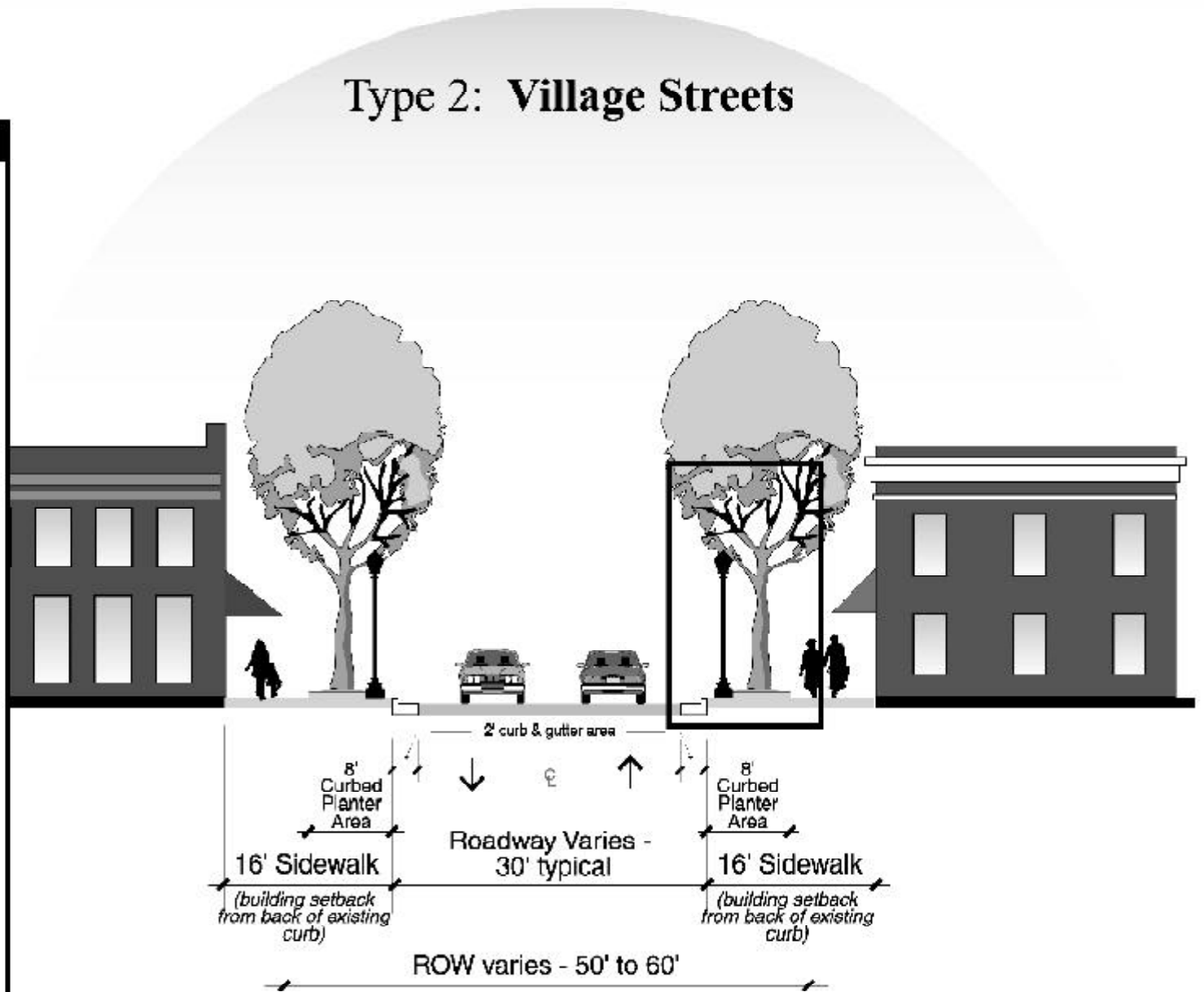
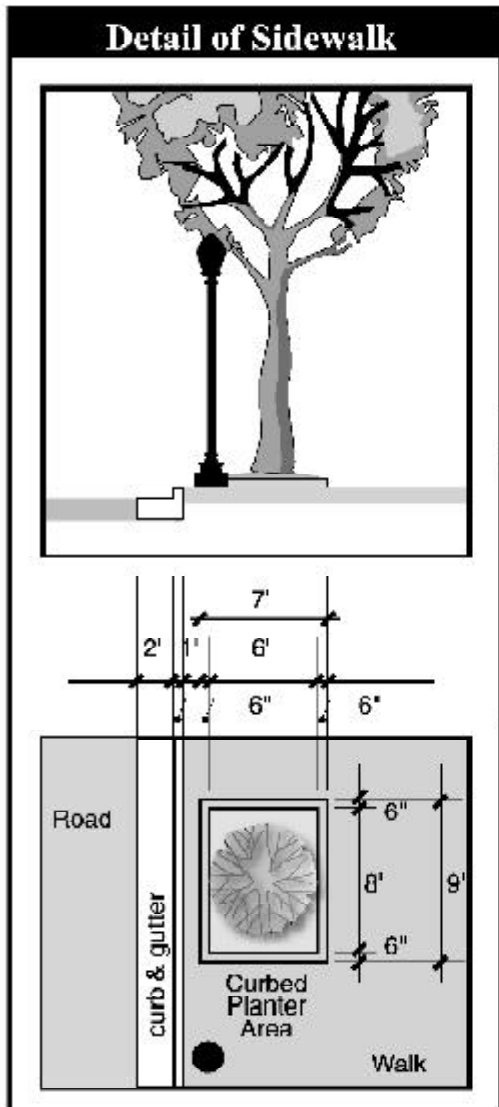
See Figure 1 for dimensional relationships.



Type 1, Village Center Street has active pedestrian use

Figure 2

Type 2: Village Streets



Type 2: Village Streets

All portions of Gordon Street, Thomas Avenue, and McClintock Road within the district; Commonwealth Avenue from The Plaza to the eastern edge; Nandina Street from Central Avenue to McClintock Road; and Pecan Avenue from Central Avenue to the northern edge.

Situation: Street Type 2 constitutes the grid of streets within the village part of the Plaza-Central District. This area is developed with commercial uses with wider setbacks than found on Central Avenue, although the area still supports a great deal of pedestrian activity. Planting strips vary in width, but generally are narrow and in poor condition due to constant pedestrian traffic. Some existing buildings make use of portions of setbacks for outdoor dining, landscaping, or merchandising purposes. Although most existing buildings are single-story, multi-story mixed-use structures also are appropriate for this area. There are opportunities for infill and redevelopment, especially on properties that now have parking lots along the front of the lot. Future development should locate parking to the side and rear of buildings.



Type 2, Village Streets have retail uses and on-street parking



Planting strips in high pedestrian areas tend to be worn

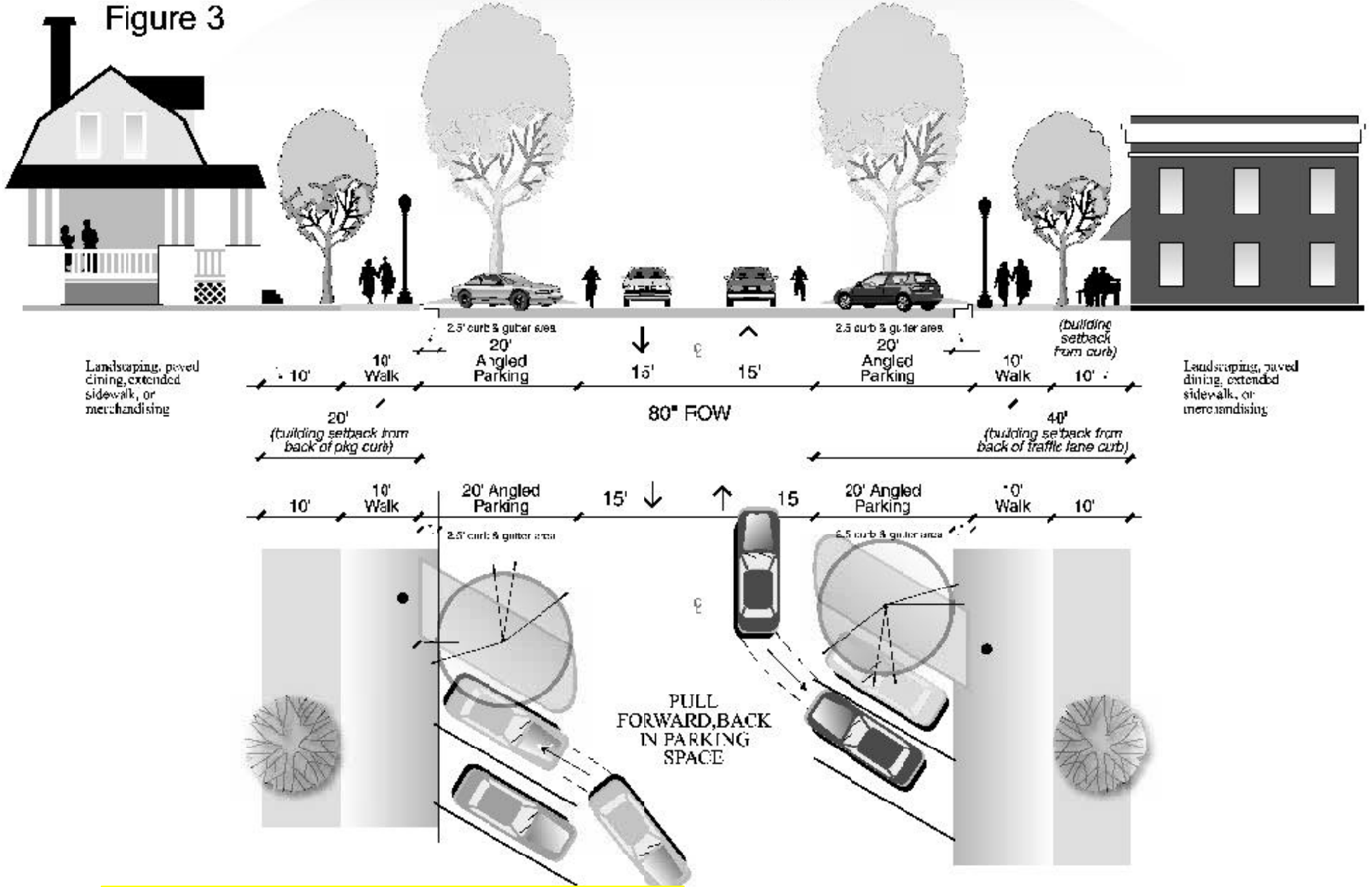
Curblines: The existing roadway of the Type 2 streets varies from block to block. All have sufficient width to meet continuing travel and parking needs. Most have one lane of traffic in each direction and parallel on-street parking on one or both sides, ranging from 28 to 40 feet in overall width. This plan maintains the existing curb location on all Type 2 streets.

Setbacks and Sidewalks: The minimum building setback is 16 feet from the back of curb. A sidewalk with a minimum width of 16 feet will adjoin the curb. This will include tree planting as described below.

Parking and Planting: Type 2 streets generally have parallel on-street parking. Planting strips are inappropriate because of the intensive retail environment and abutting on-street parking. Trees in curbed planters are required along the curb at a maximum spacing between trees in accordance with the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. Trees shall be provided with irrigation, subdrainage, and adequate soil space for roots in accordance with City standards for Urban Retail sites.

See Figure 2 for dimensional relationships.

Type 3: Wide Village Streets



Type 3: Wide Village Streets

Commonwealth Avenue from Pecan Avenue to The Plaza; and The Plaza from Commonwealth Avenue to Central Avenue.

Situation: The public rights of way for Type 3 streets are extremely wide at 80 feet, a legacy of traffic patterns before Independence Boulevard cut through the old grid. Traffic on these segments is now relatively light. They are classified as collector streets, which generally require only a single traffic lane in each direction.

Along Commonwealth Avenue, most existing buildings have significant setbacks. While the street widths are sufficient for parking on both sides, most of the properties have paved or gravel parking in front of the buildings perpendicular to the street along their entire frontage. These parking spaces are either within City right of way, or in building front yard areas, or a combination thereof. Parked cars frequently cross the sidewalk, which in some cases is essentially obliterated. Although most existing buildings are single-story, multi-story mixed-use structures also are appropriate. This street is considered a major opportunity for redevelopment.



Irregular parking in front yards along Commonwealth Avenue

Along The Plaza, there is a wide range of building setbacks. Sidewalks curbs, landscaping, and general aesthetics are generally much better than on Commonwealth Avenue. Nonetheless, the paved roadway is wide and underutilized, with a large painted center “median” area and unneeded lanes, including an ambiguous lane that actually is usable for parking.

These streets are anticipated to be low-speed urban streets, mainly serving pedestrian and vehicular traffic coming specifically to the Plaza-Central District. Commonwealth Avenue also is a designated bicycle route to and through the area.

Curblines: For Type 3 streets, a major change in configuration is envisioned. It will include a lane of 15 feet in each direction. This is sufficient to serve the needs of automobiles and bicyclists, either in separately striped lanes or a wider shared lane. In addition, a width of 20 feet will be provided on each side of the travel lanes for on-street diagonal parking. There will be curb extensions out to the edge of the roadway at intersections and other site-specific conditions, with trees in the spaces created. There also may be some driveway access points



Type 3 streets have sidewalks and parking in disarray

entering from curb extensions, although shared driveways and property access from side streets or rear alleys will be encouraged. The roadway and parking areas will utilize 70 feet of the 80-foot existing right of way.

Parking and Planting: It is expected that the areas available for diagonal parking will be maximized to make up for spaces currently existing at the fronts of properties, which will be eliminated. A maximum of six consecutive spaces will be permitted, and then a curb extension with tree equivalent of at least one space in size and shape must be provided.

For purposes of parking requirements, a property will be credited with onsite parking spaces equivalent to the number of spaces fronting the property along the curb. However, since the spaces are within the public right of way, they will remain available for general public use on an unreserved basis.

Parking spaces will be angled for back-in parking because of the superior safety characteristics of this type of parking over the head-in type. The back-in configuration allows for better vision of oncoming traffic when leaving the parking space, and is safer for bicyclists who share the road. It also directs children and others exiting from a vehicle toward the sidewalk, and allows people to put packages in the trunk from the sidewalk instead of from the street.

Setback, Planting and Sidewalks: New sidewalks a minimum of 10 feet in width will be required on each side of the parking areas. This width will allow 2 feet for parking meters, streetlights, and other needs, and 8 feet of clear space for walking. The space along existing building fronts now used for parking will become available immediately for other uses as described below.

The minimum building setback for this street type is 20 feet from the back of curb at the parking area, or 40 feet from the roadway edge. This is the equivalent of 15 feet from the existing property line. The



Back-in angled parking as proposed for use on Type 3 streets

10-foot strip from the minimum sidewalk to the building setback line may be used for landscaping, paved dining, extended sidewalk, or merchandising purposes at developer discretion. However, it must include tree planting to augment trees along the curb as necessary to meet the requirements of the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. Adequate soil space for roots, plus either an appropriate pervious soil area or irrigation and sub-drainage, must be provided in accordance with City standards.

Timing: Unlike the other street types in the Plaza-Central District, the proposed Type 3 street section will require implementation at a single point in time as part of a City Capital Improvement. Phasing over a period of time by block is also a possibility. Until street improvements are made, setback and planting requirements based on the future cross section will be in effect for new development, and onsite design must take the future cross section into account.

See Figure 3 for dimensional relationships.

Type 4: Village Edge

Central Avenue from Nandina Street to The Plaza, and from Pecan Avenue to the CSX Railroad crossing; The Plaza from Central Avenue to Hamorton Place; and Pecan Avenue from Central Avenue to the southern edge at Independence Boulevard.

Situation: Type 4 consists of several blocks immediately adjoining the Type 1 Village Center. It is developed with commercial and other uses. Setbacks are generally wider than in Type 1, and highly variable. Existing sidewalks are narrow and directly abut the curb. The degree of pedestrian activity drops off considerably due to lack of consistent building frontage and interruption by varying parking arrangements. Although most existing buildings are single-story, multi-story mixed-use structures also are appropriate. There are significant opportunities for infill and redevelopment. Future development should locate parking to the side and rear of buildings. In so doing, this section could become an integrated portion of the Plaza-Central pedestrian environment.

Like Type 1, the existing roadway in Type 4 is generally insufficient for on-street parking. There are existing buildings that limit the ability to widen the street along its full length immediately. However, there are no development patterns to prevent street widening in some places to create on-street parking as a part of new development.



Type 4, Village Edge Street is heavily traveled, but provides a difficult pedestrian environment



Street parking in uptown Charlotte with intermittent street trees, similar to the proposal for Type 4 and 5 streets

Curblines: This plan maintains the existing traffic lane widths and curb line on Type 4 streets. The streetcar line under consideration for Central Avenue would operate on a track in the existing outside (curb) lanes of Central Avenue, and would not affect road width. The streetcar would stop directly at the edge of the curb for passenger loading.

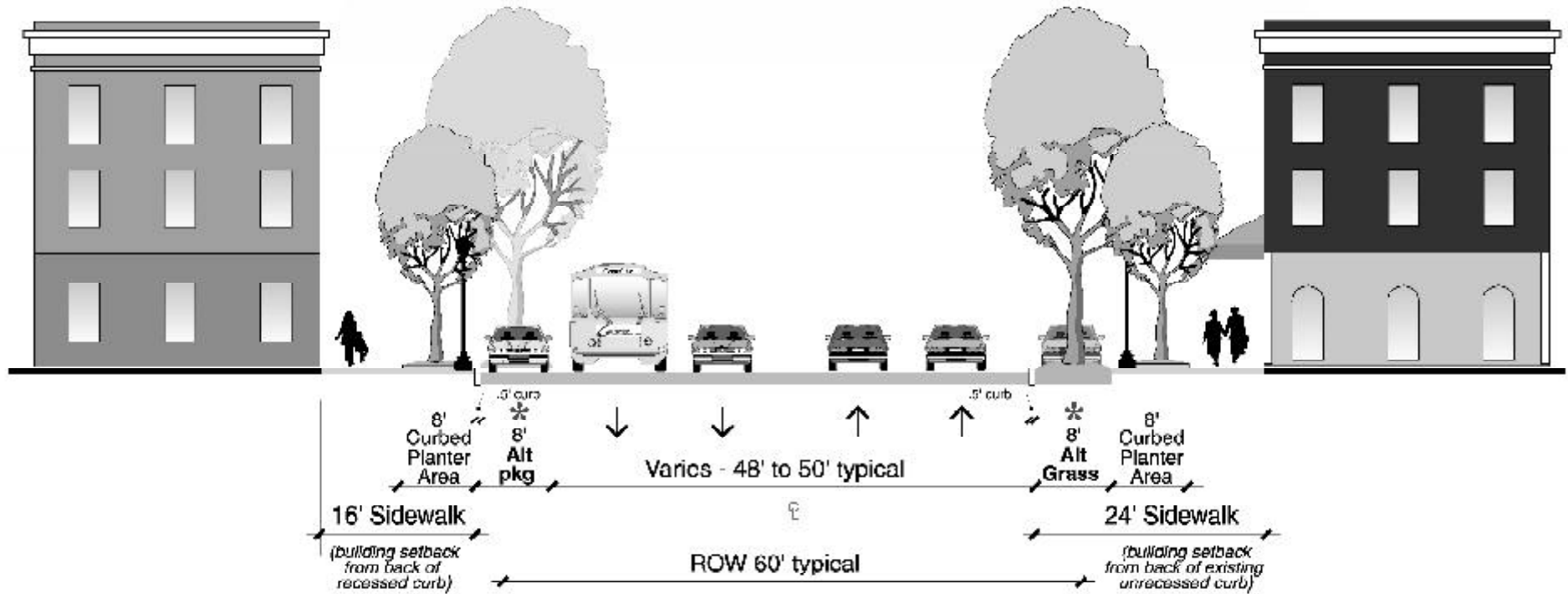
The existing roadway of Pecan Avenue south of Central Avenue is sufficient in width to allow for inclusion of bike lanes within its width. This will allow for connection of neighborhoods north of Central Avenue to the bike route extending south on Pecan Avenue.

Parking and Planting: Depending on the specifics of new development proposed for this section, an additional 8-foot width of roadway may be provided on one or both sides of the street in much of the area for on-street parallel parking. This will be done by recessing the curb only at internal portions of the block, with the curblines at intersections remaining at current locations. Each recessed parking area may extend for no more than 100 feet or 4 spaces, and then must provide an

Figure 4

* **Note:** Alt pkg or alt grass
 Area to be used
 for on-street parking
OR
 as tree planting area
 as appropriate

Type 4: Village Edge



unrecessed distance of at least 20 feet for landscaping and tree planting. Other areas that cannot have recessed parking include streetcar or bus stops, parcel driveway entrances, and other site-specific conditions. This will allow for minimum width at intersections for pedestrian crossing and establishment of some tree canopy at the street edge, while still providing new protected on-street parking.

For purposes of parking requirements, a property will be credited with on-site parking spaces equivalent to the number of new recessed spaces fronting the property along the curb. However, since the spaces are within the public right of way, they will remain available for general public use on an unreserved basis.

In places where on-street recessed parking is not provided, a planting strip eight feet in width shall be provided, with trees planted at a maximum spacing in accordance with the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*.



Curbed planter in uptown Charlotte similar to proposal for Type 2 and 4 areas

Setback, Planting, and Sidewalks: The minimum building setback for this section is 24 feet from the back of curb at the unrecessed curb location, or 16 feet from the recessed curb. Where the curb is not recessed, the street cross-section will include the 8-foot planting strip with street trees as described above. A sidewalk with a minimum width of 16 feet will adjoin the recessed curb or planting strip. As discussed for Type 2 streets, planting strips are inappropriate adjacent to on-street parking within an intensive retail environment. The 16-foot sidewalk width provides sufficient space for pedestrian movement, sidewalk dining, and other merchandising activities. Trees in curbed planters are required along recessed curb edges to augment trees along the street edge for a maximum spacing between trees in accordance with the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. Trees in curbed planters shall be provided with irrigation, subdrainage, and adequate soil space for roots in accordance with City standards for Urban Retail sites.

Timing: An important concept of the Type 4 streetscape is that “the future begins now.” Based on the existing curb line, redeveloping properties should be built to the intended design immediately. However, because sidewalk and planting requirements are different from current conditions, it is expected that transition will occur over time. For redevelopment of small mid-block parcels with varying conditions on both sides, retention of the existing features may be authorized by the Planning Director until adjoining properties are redeveloped.

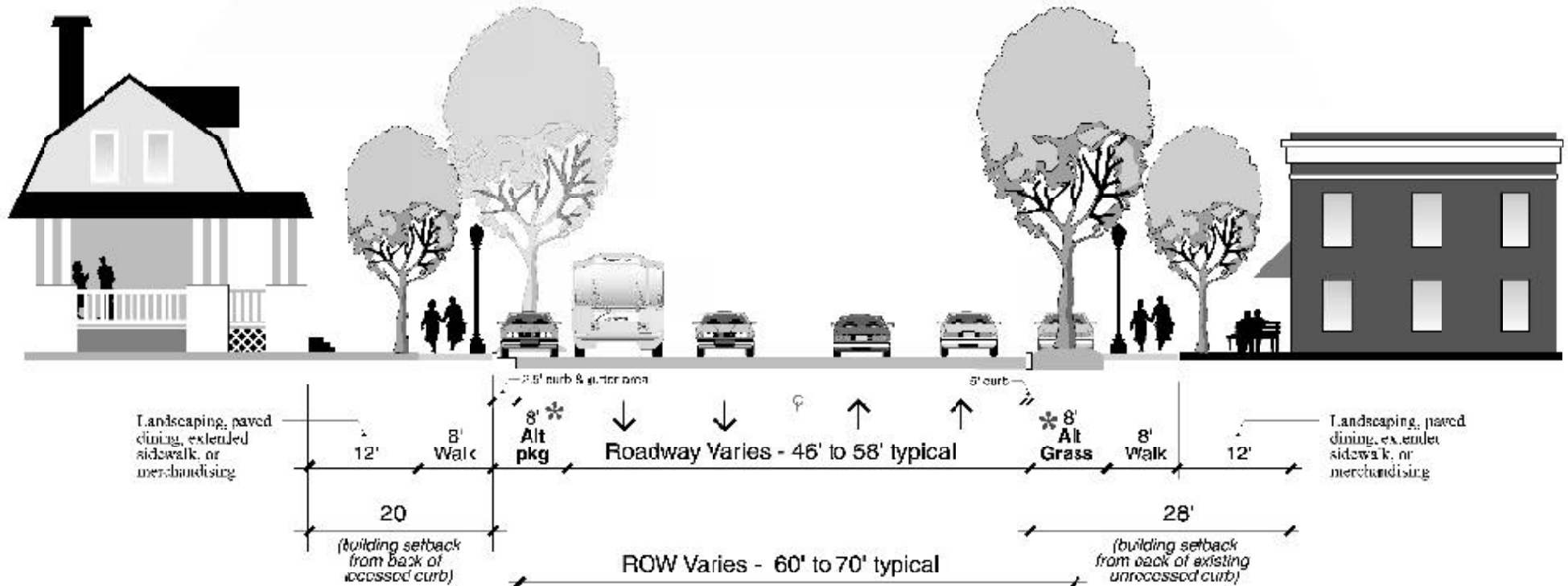
See Figure 4 for dimensional relationships.

Figure 5A

* Note: All pkg or alt grass

Area to be used
for on-street parking
OR
as tree planting area
as appropriate

Type 5A: Central West Basic Area



Type 5: Central West

Central Avenue, from the CSX Railroad crossing west to the East Independence Boulevard bridge crossing; and East Tenth Street from Louise Avenue to the western edge of the district boundary.

Situation: Type 5 streets consist of the five blocks west of the main village. The area is developed with office, retail, and other uses, many in converted older single-family homes. Setbacks are generally wider than in the village, and this area is more residential in scale. Existing sidewalks and trees are widely variable. The degree of pedestrian activity also is less than in the village. Existing buildings vary in height. There are opportunities for infill and redevelopment as well as for remodelings and additions. Future development should locate parking to the side and rear of buildings. In so doing, this section could become a lower-intensity extension of the pedestrian environment.

The existing roadway for Type 5, like that for Type 4, is insufficient for on-street parking spaces. Again, there are existing buildings that limit the ability to widen the street along its full length in the foreseeable future without demolition. However, there are no development patterns to prevent street widening in some places to create on-street parking as a part of new development.

Two Type Variations: There are two variations within the Type 5 area. The basic configuration, Type 5A, applies along Central Avenue



Type 5, Central West, has wider setback and less intensity than other street types

and Tenth Street from Louise Avenue to the western district boundaries. Although Central Avenue is not designated as a bicycle route on the County Bikeway Improvement Plan, there has been interest in preserving sufficient space for a bicycle route in the future in a portion of Central Avenue. For that reason, a Type 5 B variation applies to Central Avenue from the railroad crossing to Louise Avenue. The bike route would leave Central Avenue at Louise Avenue and continue into downtown via Tenth Street, which is less congested. A slightly wider cross section for the Type 5B area is provided to reserve sufficient width for the widening of Central Avenue if the decision should be made in the future to implement the bike lane. Differences in dimensional requirements from the basic Type 5A cross section are discussed on a following page.

Type 5A Curblines: In the basic Type 5A area, this plan maintains the existing traffic lane widths and curb line.

Type 5A Parking and Planting: Depending on the specifics of new development proposed for this section, an additional 8-foot width of roadway may be provided on one or both sides of the street for much of the area for on-street parallel parking. This will be done by recessing the curb only at internal portions of the block, with the curblines at intersections remaining at current locations. Each recessed parking area may extend for no more than 100 feet or 4 spaces, and then must provide an unrecessed distance of at least 20 feet for landscaping and tree planting. Other areas that cannot have recessed parking include streetcar or bus stops, parcel driveway entrances, and other site-specific conditions. This will allow for minimum width at intersections for pedestrian crossing, establishment of some trees at the street edge, and new protected on-street parking.

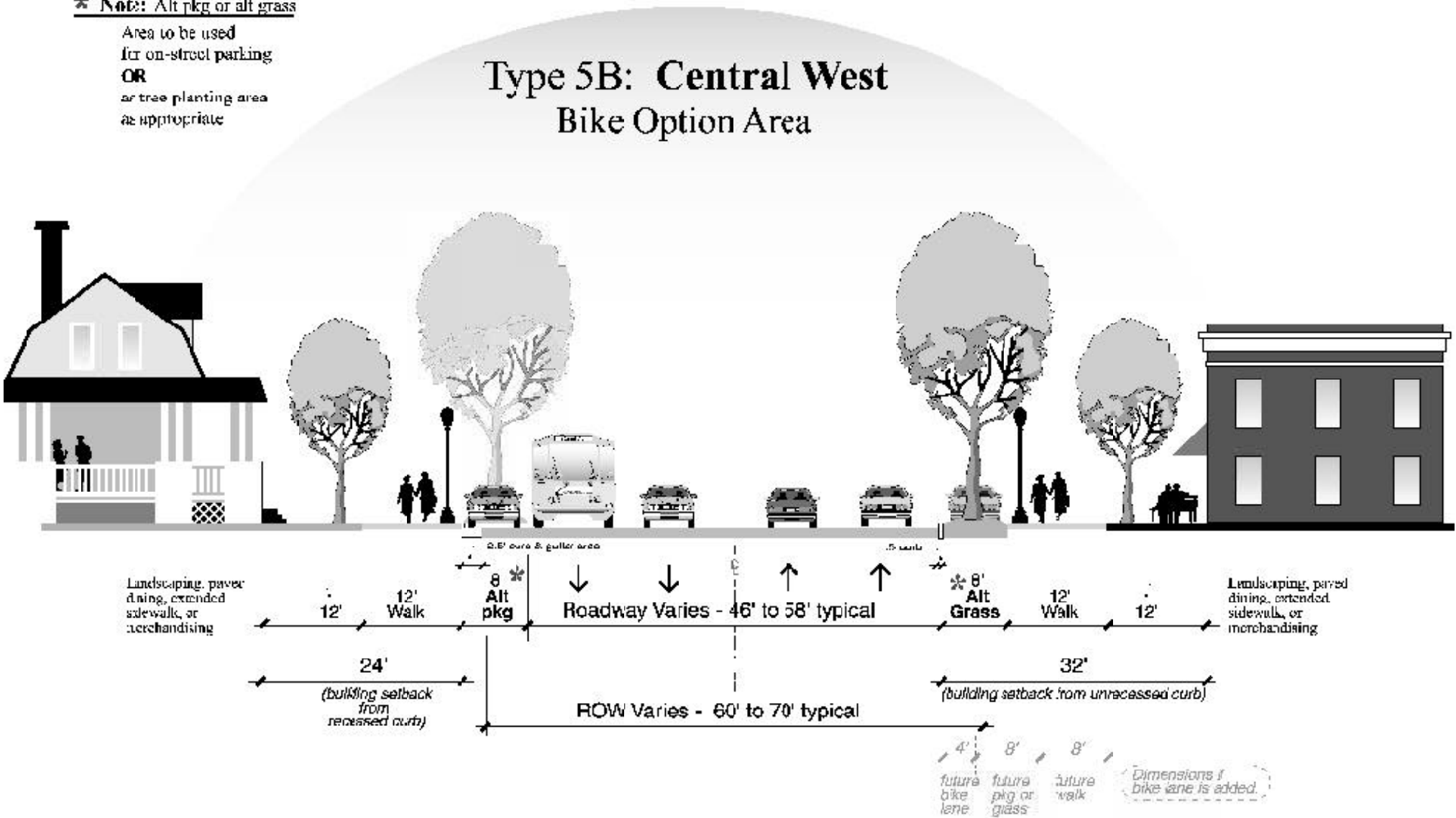
For purposes of parking requirements, a property will be credited with onsite parking spaces equivalent to the number of new recessed spaces fronting the property along the curb. However, since the spaces are within the public right of way, they will remain available for general public use on an unreserved basis.

Figure 5B

* Note: Alt pkg or alt grass

Area to be used
for on-street parking
OR
as tree planting area
as appropriate

Type 5B: Central West
Bike Option Area



In places where on-street recessed parking is not provided, a planting strip eight feet in width shall be provided, with trees planted at a maximum spacing in accordance with the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*.

Type 5A Setback, Planting, and Sidewalk: The minimum setback in the Type 5A cross section is 28 feet from the back of the unrecessed curb, or 20 feet from the recessed curb. Where the curb is not recessed, the street cross-section will include the planting strip with street trees as described above. A sidewalk with a minimum width of 8 feet will adjoin the recessed curb or planting strip. This width will allow 2 feet for parking meters, streetlights, and other needs, and 6 feet of clear space for walking. The remaining 12 feet of building setback may be used for landscaping, paved dining, or merchandising purposes at developer discretion. However, where recessed on-street parking is provided, tree planting in the setback must be provided to augment trees along the curb as necessary to meet the requirements of the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. Adequate soil space for roots, plus either an appropriate pervious soil area or irrigation and sub-drainage, must be provided in accordance with City standards.

See Figure 5A for dimensions in the Type 5A area.

Existing Trees: It is noted that there are existing mature trees in both Type 5 areas. These are located in a number of different relationships to the curblines and existing sidewalks. Recessed parking areas shall not be located such as to displace existing mature trees. In addition, based on particular site conditions, a variation in sidewalk placement, either toward the curb or toward the building, may be authorized by the Planning Director in order to preserve existing mature trees.

Timing: An important concept of the Type 5 streetscape is that “the future begins now.” Based on the existing curb line, redeveloping properties should be built to the intended design immediately. However, because sidewalk and planting requirements are different from current conditions, it is expected that transition will occur over time. For redevelopment of small mid-block parcels with varying conditions on both sides, retention of the existing features may be authorized by the Planning Director until adjoining properties are redeveloped.



Existing buildings limit the ability to widen the street

Type 5B variation: For the section of Central Avenue between the railroad crossing and Louise Street, the minimum setback is 32 feet from the back of the unrecessed curb, or 24 feet from the recessed curb. The adjoining sidewalk width is 12 feet. This provides ample width for pedestrians and merchandising, as well as for streetlights. The remaining 12 feet of building setback will be used the same as in Type 5A, and planting requirements are the same.

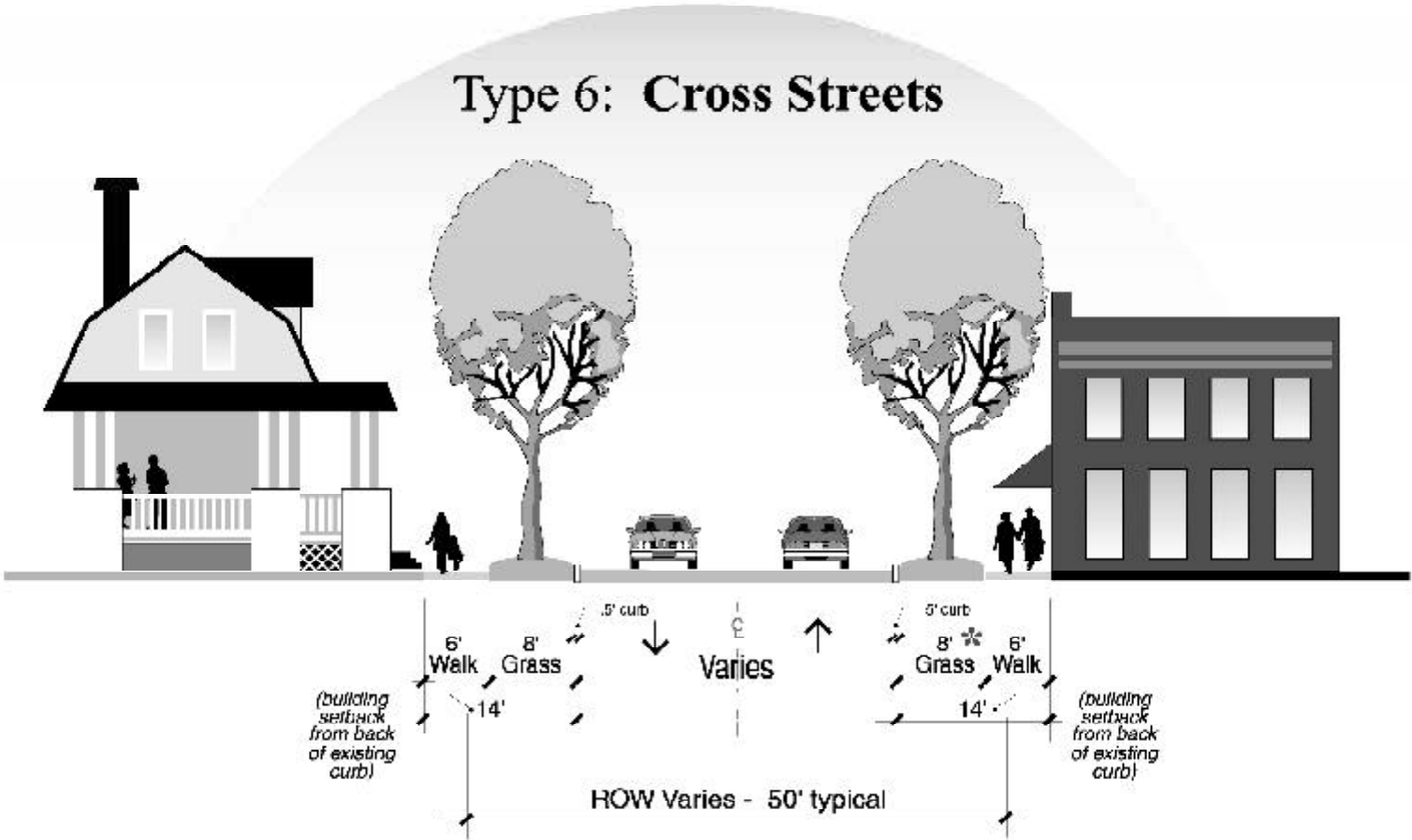
The streetcar line under consideration for Central Avenue would operate in a track in the existing outside (curb) lanes in part of the area, and would not affect road width. The streetcar would stop directly at the edge of the curb for passenger loading.

If the bike lane option for this section is implemented in the future, the 12-foot sidewalk would be reduced to 8 feet, corresponding to that in the Type 5A area. Any curbs, planting strips, parking recesses, and lighting fixtures would be relocated four feet back to provide for the added street width. The area behind the sidewalk would be undisturbed. It is understood that some existing buildings in this three-block stretch limit the potential for widening to accommodate bike lanes in the immediate future.

See Figure 5B for dimensional relationships in the Type 5B area.

Figure 6

* **Note:** Parking under limited circumstances with all tree pattern



Type 6: Cross Streets

Those portions within the district of Prospect Street, Piedmont Street, Louise Avenue, Oakland Avenue, Heath Court., Hawthorne Lane, Lamar Avenue, and Clement Avenue; also The Plaza south of Commonwealth Avenue.

Situation: Type 6 streets are the short sections of streets that lead from various adjoining areas into the Plaza-Central district. Most of the street frontage consists of the sides of office and commercial properties that face Central Avenue or Commonwealth Avenue. There are a few smaller properties further from the major intersections that front on these streets. In general, however, these streets are used less for general circulation within the District than for access to and from the adjoining communities. Existing setbacks vary considerably, and some are quite minimal. Existing buildings also vary in height.

The existing roadways in Type 6 streets vary from block to block. They generally are sufficient in width to meet continuing travel and parking needs. Most have one lane of traffic in each direction and parallel on-street parking on one or both sides. In a few cases, there also are turning lanes. The cartways range from 26 to 49 feet in overall width from curb to curb.

Curblines: This plan maintains the existing traffic lane widths and curb lines in Type 6 streets.

Setback, Planting, and Sidewalk: The minimum building setback for this type is 14 feet from the back of curb. Planting strips are appropriate because retail frontage and parking is less intense than along the major district streets, and because of the connections to other areas beyond. A planting strip with a minimum width of 8 feet will adjoin the curb, with trees required along the curb at a maximum spacing between trees in accordance with the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. A minimum 6-foot sidewalk will adjoin the planting strip.

Because sidewalk and planting requirements are different from current conditions, it is expected that transition will occur over time. For redevelopment of small mid-block parcels with varying conditions on both sides, retention of the existing features may be authorized by the Planning Director until adjoining properties are redeveloped.

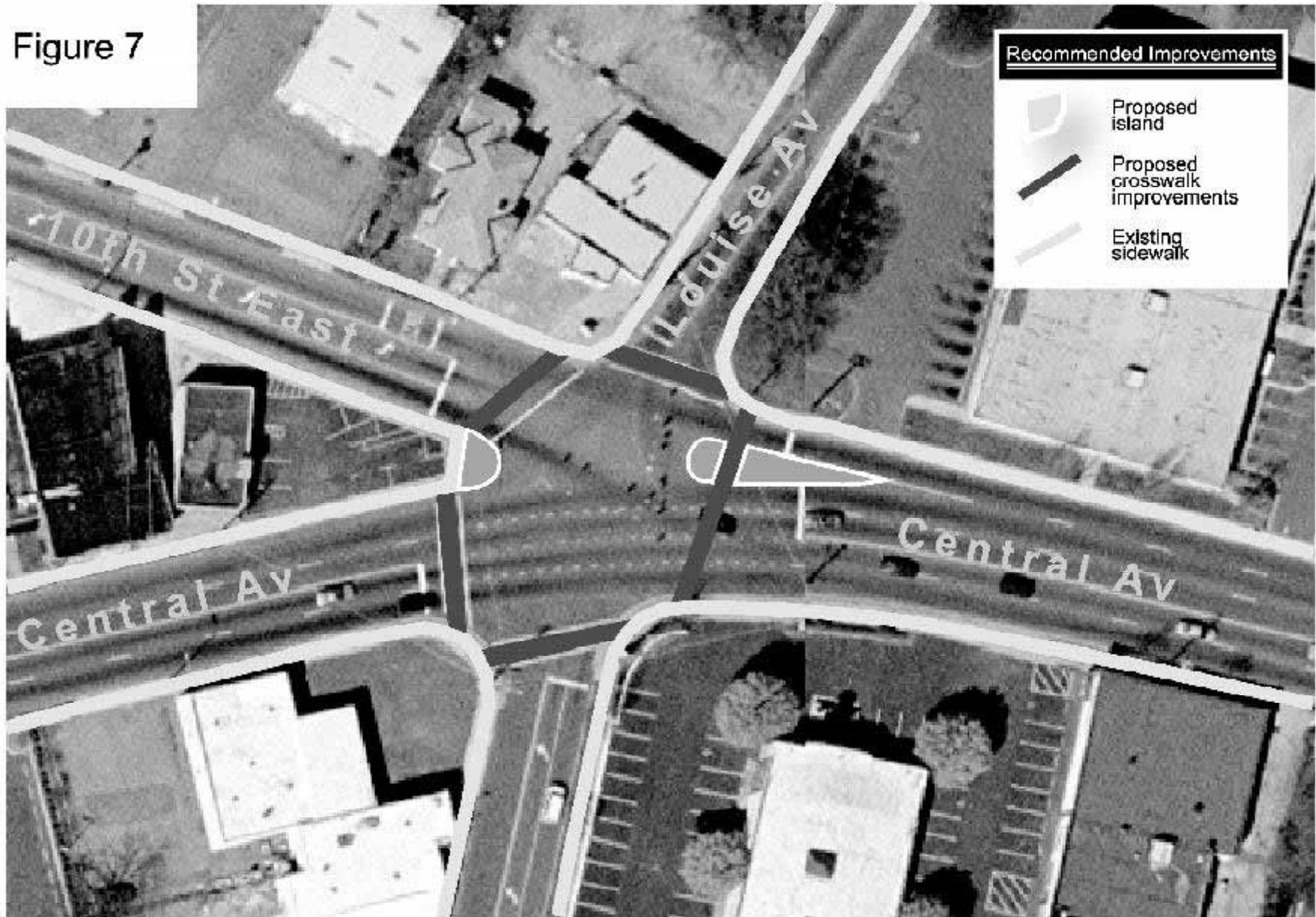
Parking: Where the Planning Director determines, in consultation with Charlotte Department of Transportation, that there is inadequate street width for on-street parking, recessed parallel parking spaces may be substituted for the planting strip as provided in street Type 5, provided that alternative arrangements are made onsite to maintain the perimeter planting requirements of the *Charlotte Tree Ordinance*. The property will be credited with onsite parking spaces equivalent to the number of new recessed spaces fronting the property along the curb. However, the spaces will remain available for general public use on an unreserved basis.

See figure 6 for dimensional relationships.



Type 6, Cross Streets, are short segments connecting from Central Avenue into adjoining neighborhoods

Figure 7



6. Recommended Streetscape and Pedestrian Improvements

It is expected that streetscape changes will happen incrementally as new development occurs under the PED standards, and as capital improvements are implemented. Where curb lines do not change, new development will be expected to implement new sidewalk and landscaping elements as they occur, except for small mid-block parcels as previously discussed. Otherwise, new development will be set back to allow the new cross-sections to be constructed in the future, and will install sidewalks and landscaping to the extent possible. Some road widenings may not occur for many years.

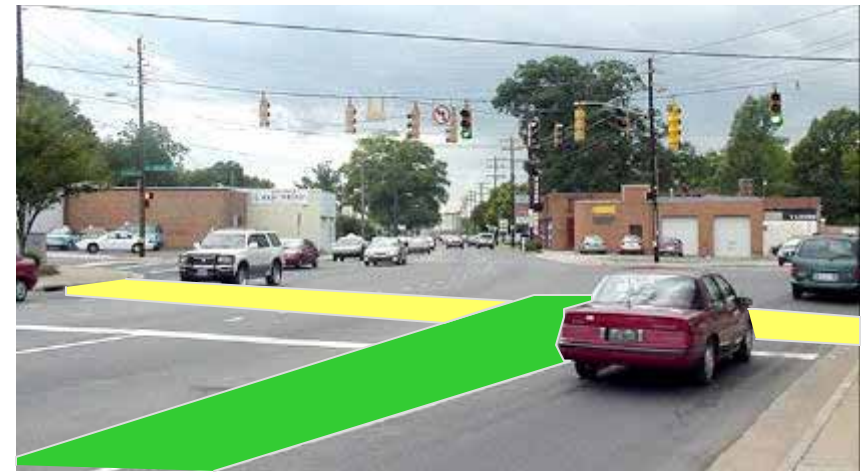
Following are recommendations for making streets within the Plaza-Central district more pedestrian friendly and for continuing the area's economic vitality. These include capital improvement projects, as well as elements of ongoing City programs.

Site- Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations are projects for specific locations, identified as part of the Plaza-Central Pedscape planning process.



The Central Five Points intersection is a particularly difficult location for pedestrian crossings



A new island will reduce the width of roadway that pedestrians will cross before reaching a refuge point

1. *Reconfiguration of the Central Five Points Intersection:* The intersection where Central Avenue meets Tenth Street and crosses Louise Avenue is a particularly difficult location for pedestrian crossings. Pavement areas are wide, sight lines across the street are poor, and traffic signal timing for the five-legged intersection limits available crossing time. At present, there is no crosswalk across Central Avenue on the east side of Louise Avenue. This requires crossing four other streets in succession to make that north-south move.

The intersection can be improved functionally and aesthetically by extending curbs in several locations and adding an island in Central Avenue east of Louise Avenue where Tenth Street veers off. The island will reduce the width of Central Avenue that a pedestrian would cross before reaching a refuge point. It also will calm traffic by removing excess paved area, and provide an area for gateway landscaping. The curb extension along Central Avenue on the west side of Louise Avenue also will reduce crossing distances, slow and channelize turning traffic, and allow for new landscaping elements. The diagram in Figure 7 shows how the revised intersection will work in concept.

Implementation of this intersection improvement is recommended as soon as public funds are available and appropriate engineering is completed. The intersection reconfiguration is designed to function within the existing curbline, and using the existing sidewalk placement, so that its construction can occur independently of any redevelopment on adjacent property. Ultimately, redevelopment of adjacent property would be expected to adhere to the streetscape standards contained herein.

2. Street and Parking Reconfiguration at Commonwealth Avenue and The Plaza: The Type 3 street configuration recommended for portions of Commonwealth Avenue and The Plaza represent major changes in the street, curbs, parking, sidewalks, and landscaping. In order for this vision to become a reality, the street elements will need to be constructed as a unit, or at minimum in full block increments. Property and business owners on the route will need to be involved in the process. It is recommended that the City initiate engineering studies for the project, conduct further public input, and proceed with construction once details are in place and funding is available.

3. Midblock Pedestrian Path from Thomas Avenue to The Plaza: The idea of pedestrian connections at mid-block locations with the Plaza-Central Village has arisen at numerous forums over the years. If paved, well lit, and well landscaped, such routes would provide additional opportunities for people to move between destinations without having to move around in cars. The paths also could connect to parking areas behind buildings. A particularly good opportunity for such a connection exists between Thomas Avenue and The Plaza, aligning generally with McClintock Road. This pedestrian connection would follow the alley just south of the Thomas Street Tavern, and use excess width in the parking bay south of the Post Office. The suggested route is noted on Map 4, Key Concepts, earlier in this report.



Proposed Midblock pedestrian path from Thomas to The Plaza

4. Connection Street, Commonwealth Avenue to Clement Avenue: The Key Concepts Map (Map 4) shows a future street connection through the existing large property south of Central Avenue and west of Pecan Avenue. By extending the street grid, this connection would improve circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, and automobiles. It also offers greatly improved development opportunity by creating high-visibility street frontage on what is currently landlocked property. With the further benefit of a proposed transit station at Independence Boulevard and Pecan Avenue, this property is an excellent candidate for significant redevelopment. There are topographic challenges to the street concept, and it could only be achieved in partnership with the property owner as a part of a major project. Nonetheless, the potential benefits make this concept worthy of pursuit.

General Recommendations

There are various improvements to the public right-of-way that can be undertaken by the City to make the Plaza-Central District more pedestrian friendly. The following are general recommendations for improvements to the public right-of-way that will be the subject of detailed engineering plans and further public input once funding is secured for their implementation.

1. *Bulb-Outs*: Bulb-outs, also known as curb extensions or neck-downs, are an effective way to reduce the crossing distance and increase the sidewalk area for pedestrians at intersections. They also demarcate parking areas, narrow the roadway pavement width and increase the landscape area at intersections, which provides some measure of traffic calming for automobiles.

This plan recommends bulb-outs at intersections in the PED area where on-street parking exists and where there is adequate roadway width to provide this extension of the curb area. There are some bulb-outs in place on parts of Thomas and Pecan Avenues and Gordon Street. In portions of Central Avenue where new recessed parking has



Example of a pedestrian refuge median

been proposed, the street sections without the recessed parking in effect become bulb-outs. Bulb-outs in other locations, particularly Type 2 and 6 streets, could be installed as soon as public funds are available and appropriate engineering design studies are complete.

2. *Pedestrian Crossings*: Pedestrian refuge medians supplement crossings at signalized intersections and provide one of the safest methods to cross the street. The pedestrian only has to look for gaps in traffic in one direction at a time.

Marked pedestrian crossings in the Plaza-Central District currently exist only at intersections with traffic signals. Central Avenue in the area west of Pecan Avenue is lacking in traffic signals and is particularly difficult for pedestrians to cross. The following pedestrian crossing locations are suggested:

- Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and the railroad track
- Central Avenue between the railroad track and Louise Avenue.

3. *Marked Cross-Walks and Other Pedestrian Improvements*: In addition to the crossing treatments recommended above, the existing cross-walks at signalized intersections need to be enhanced to make them more apparent to pedestrians and drivers.

4. *Pedestrian-Scale Lighting*: Typical streetlights illuminate the roadway, but do not provide significant lighting for the pedestrian area of a street. Pedestrian-scale lighting is shorter in height than typical streetlights, and is designed to provide lighting for the pedestrian area. Central Avenue between Pecan Avenue and Nandina Street has such lighting in place. Additional pedestrian-scale, decorative lighting should be installed in the public right-of-way in other areas of the district, with priority given to areas of highest pedestrian and redevelopment activity. This is particularly applicable to Type 2, 3 and 4 streets within the main village retail area.

5. *Bicycle Parking:* Because of its convenience to nearby neighborhoods, many residents can travel to the stores and restaurants in the Plaza-Central District by bicycle. There is only limited bicycle parking for these patrons. The City of Charlotte is undertaking a revision to the Zoning Ordinance that would require bicycle parking in new developments, just as automobile parking is required. However, there are many existing businesses that will not redevelop in the near future and will not be required to retrofit bicycle parking on their property, even if a new bicycle parking standards are added to the ordinance.

This plan recommends that the City of Charlotte install racks for short-term bicycle parking in or near the public right-of-way in the vicinity of the public parking lot at Central and Thomas Avenues. Readily visible bicycle parking will be especially useful for those businesses whose doors front on the sidewalk, since cyclists are most likely to park where their bicycles can be seen from their intended destination.

6. *Street Trees:* Street trees should be planted in the public right-of-way where there are opportunities for new or replacement trees.

7. *Public Art:* The City of Charlotte will work with the neighborhood organizations, property owners, local residents, business owners, and area arts organizations to determine appropriate locations and designs for public art installations for the corridor. Potential locations might include new pedestrian islands at the Central Five Points intersection at Louise Avenue, and the open space at Central and Pecan Avenues. Public art is in place at the public parking lot at Central and Thomas Avenues.

8. *ADA/Curb Ramps:* ADA ramps generally are in place throughout the district. At some corners, the ramps were built with a single ramp leading diagonally into the intersection rather than with separate ramps leading across each street. The City of Charlotte should conduct an inventory of existing ADA curb ramp locations and alignments to assess needs for new construction or realignment of these ramps.

9. *Benches, Trash Cans:* The City also should install public benches and trash cans in appropriate high-pedestrian traffic locations. City policy is to install trash cans at bus stop locations. Some of this has been accomplished in the core of the area.

Long Term Recommendation

Utility Line Consolidation/Relocation: Overhead utility lines are one of the most prominent and unsightly features of the Plaza-Central streetscape. Citizens, staff and developers have voiced strong interest in having the utility lines buried and/or moved out of the Central Avenue right-of-way.

This plan recommends that utilities be relocated, to alleys where possible, or out of the Central Avenue right-of-way, and/or buried within the Plaza-Central District.

The main obstacle to removing utility lines, however, is cost, which is estimated by Duke Power to be around \$3-4 million per mile along a major thoroughfare. Utility companies may be willing to move overhead utility lines, but will not assume the cost themselves. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission has convened a group to look at the costs and develop a policy for relocating or burying utilities, but at this time there are no budgeted public funds for such efforts.

Part IV: IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

This section outlines the key actions that are needed to implement the recommendations in Parts 1 through 3 preceding. This section on implementation will not be adopted by elected officials, but many of the actions identified will require future action by City Council. These items will be brought forward on a case-by-case basis.

The work of transforming the Plaza-Central streetscape will occur over many years and will require the efforts of local government, private property owners, residents, and developers. The following is an outline of the responsibilities of the public and private sectors for implementing the Pedscape Plan.

1. Public Sector Responsibilities

The public sector will provide the policy basis, the oversight and some infrastructure improvements for the implementation of the plan. However, the major changes to the corridor will become evident only as private investment begins to fill in the framework that the community and the City of Charlotte have laid out in this Plan. Local government will provide some investment in streetscape amenities that can be accommodated within the existing right-of-way. Major public investment in the form of constructing new roadway cross-sections may not occur until design details are in place and funding is available, and until interest in private redevelopment for the area has been demonstrated.

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) is engaged in planning for the proposed streetcar system, in consultation with other City departments. Implementation of this system is an important element for the Plaza-Central district.



Transportation Network and Streetscape Infrastructure

The following streetscape improvements can be implemented by the City of Charlotte pending commitment of capital improvement funding. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission and/or the Charlotte Department of Transportation will be responsible for submitting requests for funding of these projects and initiating engineering plans for these recommended improvements:

- Pedestrian, bicycle, and roadway improvements
- Construction of recommended bulb-outs
- Installation of pedestrian refuge islands
- Installation of bicycle parking racks in public right-of-way
- Construction of ADA/curb ramps
- Installation of public art
- Installation of trash cans

Land Use and Community Design

Pedscape Plan Adoption and Overlay Zoning District: The Planning Department, in consultation with other City departments, is responsible for the preparation of this plan, and for guiding it through the adoption process. The Planning Department also is responsible for initiating and guiding the rezoning process for adoption of the PED overlay district.

Proposed Corrective Rezoning: As previously discussed in the Recommended Land Use section of the report, one aspect of the recommendations needs to be addressed through a publicly initiated rezoning. Portions of the district are zoned I-2 for Industrial uses. For the most part, these areas have transitioned to retail and office uses appropriate to the district. The PED overlay zoning will allow residential uses as well. However, there remains potential for incompatible uses to develop unless the underlying industrial zoning is changed. These areas should be rezoned to B-2 General Business. The recommended rezonings are indicated on Map 7.

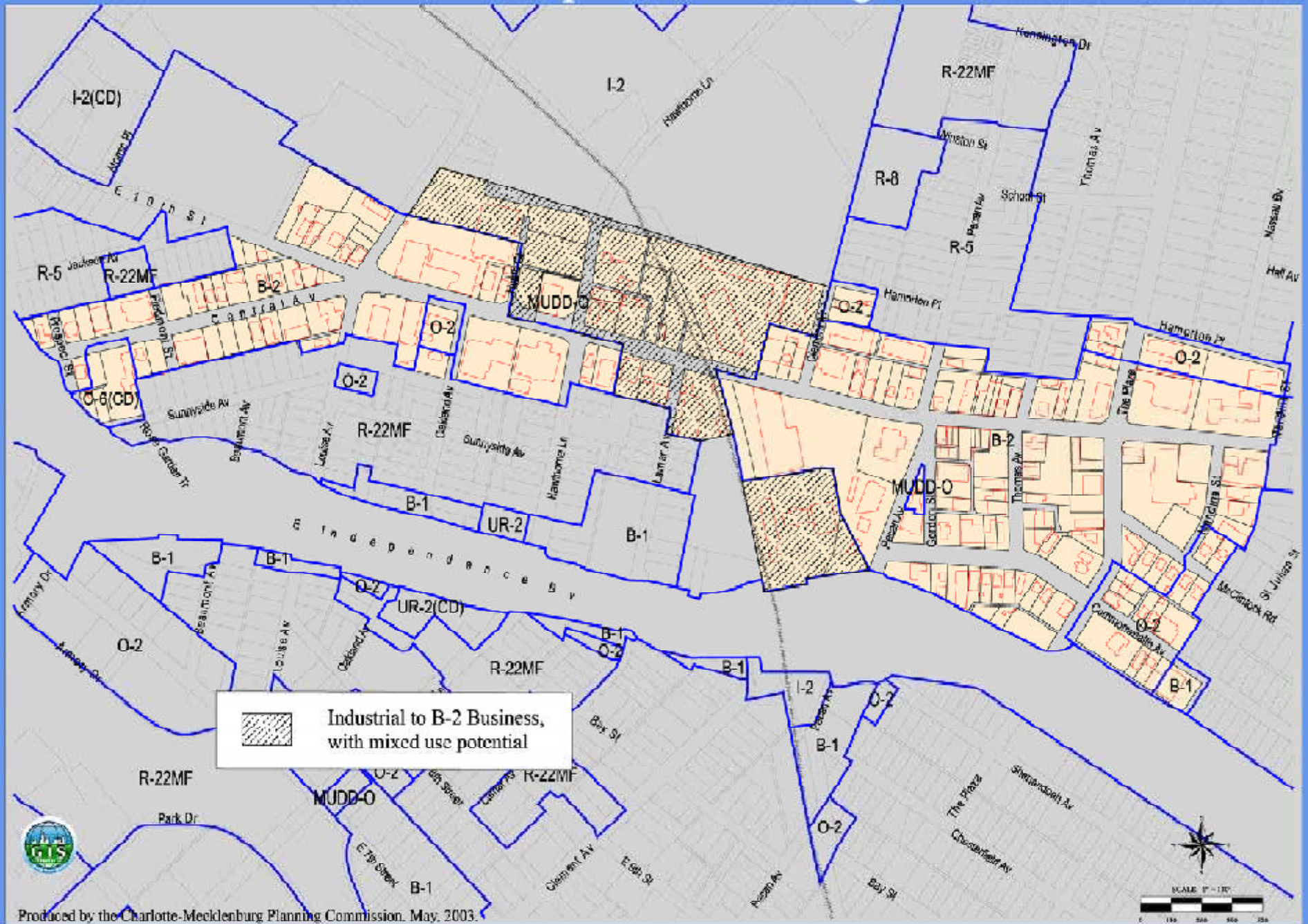
Monitoring/Reviewing New Development Plans (on-going): The Planning Department and other City departments will be responsible for the on-going plan review for new developments within the Pedscape Plan area, as prescribed in the PED zoning standards. This responsibility will include ensuring that the standards of PED and this plan are met by developers.


2. Private Sector Responsibilities

The private sector will be responsible for pedestrian-friendly development that is consistent with PED zoning requirements and the development standards of this plan. As soon as the PED rezoning has been approved, development under the PED standards will be required for all new development and major renovation on the corridor.

Map 7

Plaza Central Pedscape Plan Proposed Rezoning



 Industrial to B-2 Business,
with mixed use potential

