



# Downtown Vision Plan **MORGANTON**

2018





# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Public Art Action Plan</b>	<b>80</b>
1.1 Introduction to the Plan .....	3	6.1 The Art Scene Today .....	81
1.2 Statement of Morganton Update.....	5	6.2 Policies that Promote Art .....	83
1.3 Guiding Principles .....	6	6.3 Logistics & Art Champions.....	84
1.4 Key Goals .....	6	6.4 Funding Strategies for Public Art .....	85
1.5 Top 10 in 5 .....	7	SmART Initiative .....	86
<b>Metrics of a Successful Downtown 10</b>		6.5 Finding Community Partnerships .....	87
2.1 How is Great Urbanism Measured? .....	11	6.6 Public Art Programming .....	91
2.2 Design Elements .....	11	6.7 Top 4 Public Art Projects in 2 Years .....	92
2.3 General Design Concepts .....	13	<b>Key Goals</b>	<b>94</b>
2.4 Implementation & Management Issues.....	14	7.1 Restore Two-way Operation to the Union/Meeting & Sterling/Green Pairs.....	95
2.5 Measurable Performance .....	15	7.2 Maximize The Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space .....	103
<b>2.6 Creating Great Places .....</b>	<b>16</b>	7.3 Focus Activity into the Core.....	109
2.7 The 7 “D’s” .....	17	7.4 Diversify and Expand Housing .....	113
<b>Existing Conditions</b>	<b>20</b>	7.5 Connect to the Community.....	122
3.1 Planning Efforts.....	21	7.6 Embed Art into Everything.....	129
3.2 Area Geography & Population.....	25	7.7 Have Fun and Experiment.....	131
3.3 Infrastructure Analysis .....	26	<b>Development &amp; Redevelopment Opportunities</b>	<b>144</b>
3.4 Topography and Floodplain .....	30	8.1 Development Opportunity Analysis.....	145
3.5 Gateways.....	31	8.2 Development Overview .....	147
3.6 Planning Analysis .....	31	8.3 Opportunity Areas .....	149
3.7 Public Art .....	35	<b>Management &amp; Operations Strategies</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Public Engagement</b>	<b>38</b>	9.1 Parking.....	167
4.1 Engagement Overview .....	39	9.2 Policy Strategies .....	171
4.2 Online Survey.....	39	9.3 Financing & Incentives .....	172
4.3 Focus Group Meetings .....	41	9.4 Events & Programming .....	174
4.4 Taphouse Takeover .....	45	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>176</b>
4.4 Biking & Walking Tours and Bike Audit.....	47	10.1 Top 10 in 5.....	177
4.5 The Charrette .....	49	10.2 Implementation Matrix.....	189
4.6 Final Presentation .....	57	10.3 How We Know We Succeeded.....	199
<b>Market Conditions &amp; Retail Strategies</b>	<b>62</b>		
5.1 Existing Conditions .....	63		
5.4 Downtown Housing Strategy.....	78		



# 1

## **Executive Summary**

**Introduction to the Plan**

**State of Morganton Update**

**Guiding Principles**

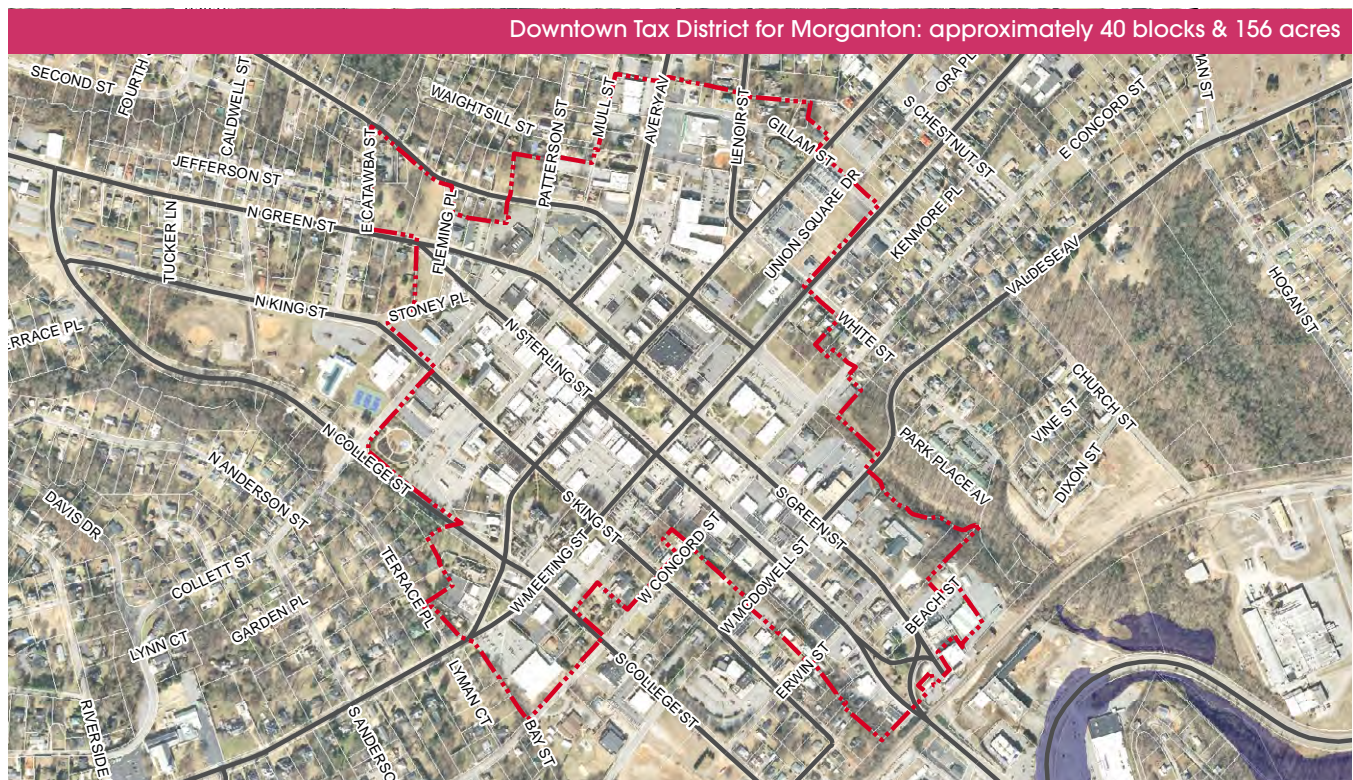
**Key Goals**

**Top 10 in 5**

## 1.1 Introduction to the Plan

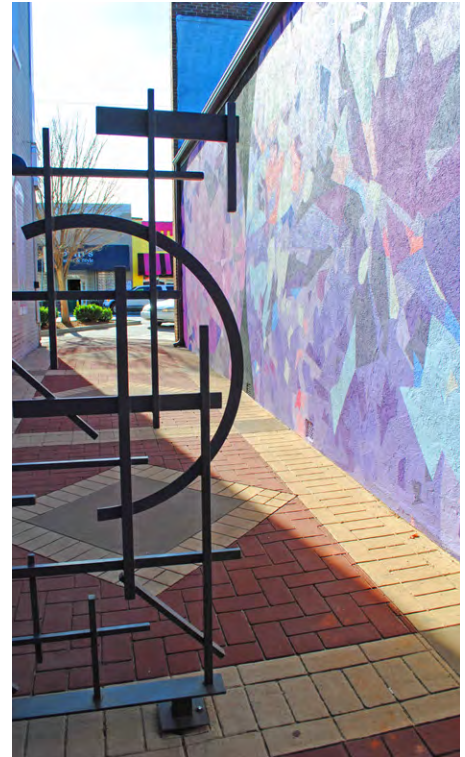
The Vision Plan for Downtown Morganton creates community connections with downtown as the centerpiece. The plan updates and expands the 1997 Downtown Master Plan and builds upon the energy that has revitalized downtown in a way not seen since the 1950's. The key difference is that ten years ago the city had to sell a vision. Today, the city has a story to tell. This compelling story of new investment and making things happen includes a first-run movie theater, craft breweries and bottleshops, farm-to-table dining options and a community of citizens that genuinely love their downtown. Stantec, a multi-disciplinary team of professionals specializing in building communities and great places, was hired by the city to lead the process. With great care and attention to previous efforts, the team set out to understand the many facets of downtown Morganton—from the economics to the transportation system. Through an intensive public outreach process, a diverse cross-section of citizens helped craft the ideas and elements that will improve their quality of life for today and future generations. Catalyst sites within the downtown framework were designed in detail with a continuous feedback loop of public input during a week-long design charrette.

As noted in the 2017 State of Morganton address, this city is on the brink of many new and exciting projects...many that will further emphasize the importance and unique nature of downtown. Downtown Morganton is THE intersection of history, art, and urban living for this community. Building on that idea, the recommendations found in this document offer quality solutions intended to spur additional investments in downtown housing, retail and commercial development, the arts, historical activities, and the multi-modal transportation system. Development decisions based on sound market trends and national best practices will ensure the patterns of place in downtown are setting the bar high. The city will use this document as a policy guide for downtown's growth and development throughout the thirty-six block downtown area with consideration of how adjacent neighborhoods integrate and grow to support the overall success of downtown. Guiding principles and key goals help frame the recommendations for the next chapter of Downtown Morganton's story.





**Top**, left to right / Burke County Historic Courthouse north side / Historic Morganton Community House on the corner of Queen and N. King Streets **Left** / Active and colorful N. Sterling Street storefronts **Right** / Alley off of N. Sterling Street with purple diamond mural and iron gate **Bottom** / Gateway into downtown from the west at the intersection of N. Green and N. Sterling Streets



## 1.2 Statement of Morganton Update

Downtown Morganton remains the economic, historic, and cultural heart of our community. As the community's heart, downtown provides life, energy, activity, and opportunity that supports the vitality of all of Morganton. Downtown is more than a defined 36-block area in the center of our community, it is an experience.

The 1997 Masterplan provided a foundation for public and private investments that transformed downtown into a true regional attraction offering retail, dining, residential choices, and entertainment for people far beyond the borders of Morganton. However, nothing remains the same and like any other successful business, we must continually evaluate, reinvent, and provide a product that responds to changing times and demands. This process allows us to learn from the past, plan for the future, and attract partners to ensure continued vibrancy and success in downtown Morganton.

Over the past year, dedicated citizens have volunteered many hours to assist City Council and City staff in creating a blueprint for the vision and promise for the next chapter in the life of Downtown Morganton. Stantec and the entire team of planning and development professionals have guided a process that valued significant community input and participation to achieve a final plan.

This plan is the starting point for the next decade of investing in Downtown Morganton. The success of this plan and our community will require bold ideas, new investment, new strategies, and the participation, cooperation, and support of many.

On behalf of our entire City Council, I thank you for your commitment to Morganton and I ask you to take advantage of opportunities to engage and participate as we move forward with this plan to ensure a healthy and successful downtown.

Sincerely,

Ronnie Thompson  
Mayor



## 1.3 Guiding Principles

### Put People First

Morganton's citizens and visitors are its number one priority. This key principle emphasizes the necessity to primarily consider pedestrians and cyclists, residents and tourists, business owners and their patrons, and all other subgroups of the diverse population of Morganton. For too long, vehicles have been the number one consideration in planning efforts for downtowns. For the future vision of downtown Morganton, people will be put first and enjoy a safe, walkable environment.

### Life Begins at the Square

The emotional heart of downtown Morganton is the Courthouse Square. The Square is the center of social interaction and community activities, as well as, the physical core of downtown at the intersection of main-and-main, Union and Sterling Streets. The energy and activity should emanate from this key public space.

### Downtown is a Destination

Another side effect of car domination in the past is that downtown has become an inconvenience to be bypassed as quickly as possible during daily commutes for the working-class. Instead of focusing on getting people through downtown as efficiently as possible, the focus should be on getting people to downtown to live, work, and play as the ultimate destination for residents and visitors.

## 1.4 Key Goals

### Restore Two-Way Operations

Restoring all streets to two-way operation will reduce driver confusion, increase retail visibility, and help make downtown a more walkable, safer pedestrian environment.

### Maximize The Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space

The Courthouse Square still is and always has been the emotional and historic center of the community. Overall, strategies for improvement focus on bringing more vibrancy and reinforcing a sense that this space belongs to the community and is open for all to enjoy.

### Focus Activity into the Core

The intersection of Union and Sterling Streets is the "Main-and-Main" of downtown and a concentration of social interaction in active ground floor retail space should be focused along these core blocks.

### Diversify and Expand Housing

Downtown needs more residents. Several housing opportunity sites have been identified which will support a range of housing types to better meet the demand in downtown Morganton.

### Connect to the Community

Downtown is the intersection of the community. Residents and visitors alike should have lots of choices to safely and enjoyably move to and through the downtown area.

### Embed Art into Everything

The art scene in Morganton is extremely active and constantly growing. The future identity of downtown should be expressed through the local artists by embedding art into as many public and private spaces as possible.

### Have Fun and Experiment

Not every addition or improvement to downtown needs to be permanent. Thinking outside of the box and testing some creative ideas is the key to creating momentum.



Morganton citizens enjoying the parklet

## 1.5 Top 10 in 5

These ideas represent the ten projects the city should prioritize over the next five years. More details can be found in chapter 10.

# 1

Complete the two-way conversion



# 2

Adopt a ground floor active use overlay district for the core blocks



# 3

Increase retail and restaurant tenants on the ground floor of the core to 90%



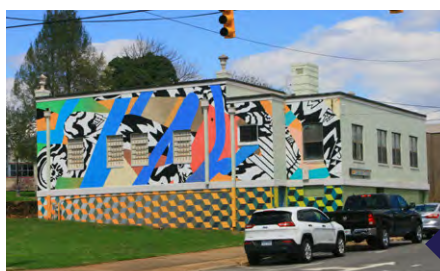
# 4

Attract a hotel to downtown



# 5

Move the Arts Council to pioneer a new block



# 6

Renovate The  
Courthouse Square



# 7

Construct 100 new  
housing units in  
downtown



# 8

Improve College  
Street to a “green  
street” connecting  
the downtown to the  
Broughton and State  
Property Campus



# 9

Bury or relocate the  
overhead utilities  
around the core



# 10

Create an outdoor  
courtyard space in  
the Union Street alley



Mountain View  
PROPERTIES

Wild On





# **Metrics of a Successful Downtown**

**How is Great Urbanism Measured?**

**Design Elements**

**Implementation & Management Issues**

**Measurable Performance**

**Creating Great Places**

**The 7 “D’s”**

## 2.1 How is Great Urbanism Measured?

Through research and experience, we have found that there are essential elements that help create successful downtown environments. In combination, these elements yield measurable indicators of success. It is not enough to simply get the physical design right, implementation and management are also key to creating an environment where people want to spend money and time.

The old adage “if you build it they will come” is true only if you have a good code and good design bones in place, along with proper management. The products of a successful downtown environment include more employment, a diverse population, higher sales per square foot, and overall positive economic development for a community.

## 2.2 Design Elements

Design elements that contribute to successful downtown environments include:

### Bicycle Parking

To become a more pedestrian and bike-friendly city, the provision of bicycle parking areas is essential. Bike racks can be whimsical and artsy, even implemented as public art projects. Standard bike racks should compliment other furnishings in downtown and provide a two-point connection for security, and bikes should be oriented parallel to the road when locked if on the public sidewalk.

### Benches & Movable Seating

Benches in downtown areas should be expressive and creative, adding to the community’s visual interest. Movable seating is being used more regularly in downtowns because of the flexibility it offers users. Restaurants often provide this type of seating for their patrons; however, cities are placing movable seating in public spaces because of the high demand for this amenity.

### Wide Sidewalks

The minimum width of a sidewalk to accommodate comfortable outdoor seating is fourteen feet from curb to building face. In areas where this distance is not available, while not ideal, narrow bistro-style seating can still work. On streets with even narrower sidewalks, on-street parking spaces can be replaced with parklets in strategic locations with compatible uses.

### Seasonal Color

Planter baskets should be utilized on the street lights to add vertical color. Additional container plantings placed near benches and at corners help to soften the environment and add visual interest. New fabrication techniques make container plantings lower maintenance by utilizing self-watering technology.

### Trash & Recycling

Patrons have come to expect recycling services in downtown environments and combination trash & recycling receptacles are becoming commonplace in urban settings. Receptacle design should coordinate with the styling of the benches as well.

### Ambient Illumination

Lighting in a downtown is about both safety and interest. There are different zones of lighting: the lighting of storefronts, lighting of the general pedestrian pathway, and street lighting. String lights can be placed in street trees, over major streets, and even in alleys to add ambiance and charm.

### Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi enables wireless access to the internet. Many communities throughout the country are equipping their downtowns with Wi-Fi “Hot Spots” or Wi-Fi zones. Within these zones, internet users are able to connect to the world wide web at a very high rate of speed without the hassle of cable connections.





“Streets and their sidewalks — the main public places of a city — are its most vital organs.”

– Jane Jacobs



**Top** / Bike parking (Savannah, GA)  
**Right** / Movable seating (Mocksville, NC)  
**Bottom** / Wide sidewalk (San Francisco, CA)



### Public Restrooms

Public restroom facilities are a welcome amenity to residents and visitors particularly in key public spaces. Strategic location and willingness of adjacent business owners are keys to the success of a public restroom.

### On-Street Parking

On-street parking provides a one ton safety barrier between moving cars and pedestrians and also provides convenient parking for retail. Retail will often not survive without it, and in a smaller community, patrons see cars parked on the street as a signal of activity and a need to slow down providing friction for moving traffic as an inherent traffic calming element.

## 2.3 General Design Concepts

### Short Blocks and a Dense Street Network

Short blocks provide enhanced walkability for people and increased connectivity for cars. The average block length between cross-streets should be shorter in a downtown environment because it feels more pedestrian in scale. Short blocks also provide more corner locations, which are ideal for retail.

### Building Height

Building facades play an important role in creating a sense of place through spatial enclosure. Short one story buildings set back from the street provide no spatial enclosure and therefore create no sense of place.

In general, an ideal building height in downtown would relate well to the existing historic character, but taller buildings can be appropriate in some areas (e.g., lining wider streets)

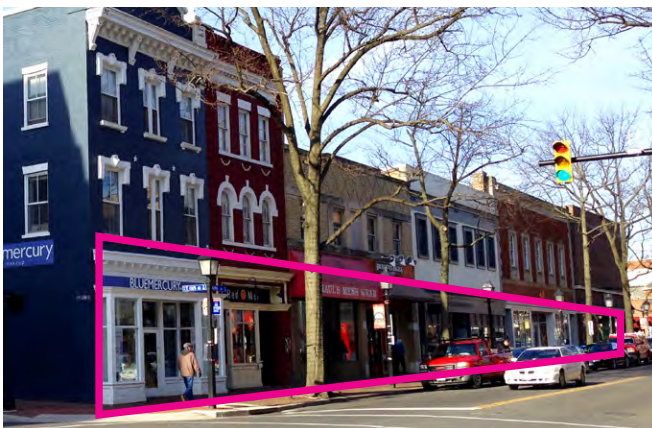
### Continuous Active Frontages

Active storefronts keep pedestrians and bicyclists interested while traveling along the street. Research has proven that people are more likely to keep walking along a continuous frontage of activity to see what is beyond. As one vacant tenant space can create barriers to success, maintaining active uses on the ground floor is critical to an area's vibrancy.

### Enclosure of the Street

The ratio of building height to street width is essential to creating a comfortable public realm. Too much enclosure can feel narrow and unsafe, while too little can feel vast and empty. Achievable ratios vary based on right-of-way width, but street trees can help create spatial enclosure where buildings cannot. Ideal height to width ratios in a small-scale downtown should be between 1:1 and 1:2.

In order to better enclose the public realm, street trees and outdoor dining with umbrellas, along with the existing awnings can create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians.



Continuous active frontages along a small-scale downtown street (Alexandria, VA)

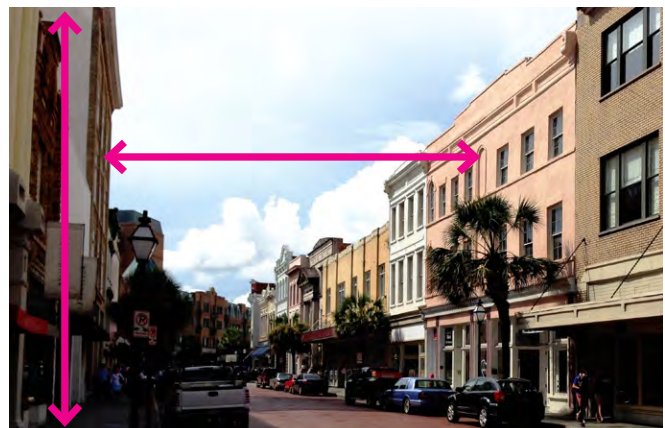


Diagram showing the ideal spatial enclosure for a main street (Charleston, SC)



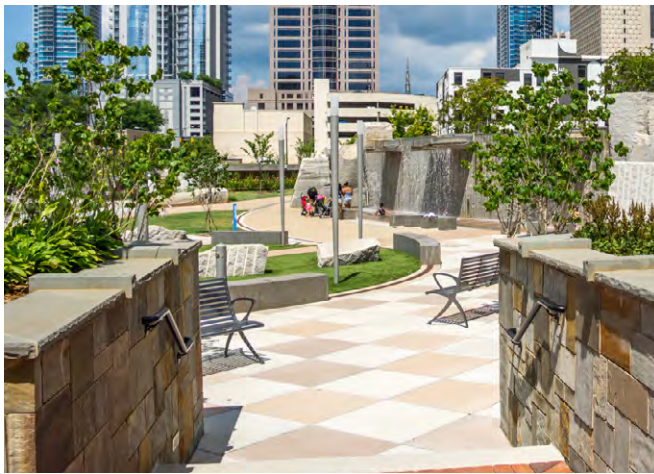
## 2.4 Implementation & Management Issues

Implementation of design features and management of the spaces and activities in a downtown contribute directly to the overall success of the place.

**Some key elements include:**

### Quality & Diversity of Public Space

Public space is a top requested element in downtowns. It is not enough to simply have one park or civic gathering space. Spaces of varying sizes programmed for a diversity of events are necessary for overall success and energy.



**Top & Bottom** / Variety of spaces for diverse user groups, Romare Bearden Park (Charlotte, NC)

### Keys to Parking

The key to parking in a downtown environment is that location needs to be considered over quantity. It is all about management. True parking supply problems are a good thing and indicate that people are spending time and money in your downtown. This is an issue that needs to be re-evaluated every three to four years.

### Active Ground Floor Uses

Humans innately have a sense of unease that can be triggered when passing a dead space or boarded-up facade and often prevents us from continuing the journey. Activating the ground floor of buildings in your downtown is something that can be incorporated into the code and can be achieved through active retention and recruitment efforts.

### Hours of Operation

Coordination of store hours ensures a more predictable environment for potential shoppers. Vibrant downtowns have a variety of businesses with an array of operating hours, but holistically, most businesses are generally open from morning hours to late evening or into the night, which helps to minimize dark shopfronts at various times. Evening hours are perhaps the most important for retail shops. As much as 70% of all consumer retail spending in brick and mortar stores takes place after 6:00 pm.

### Clustering

Restaurants are key to creating destination downtowns. Rather than being separated and isolated, intentionally clustering these tenants is much more effective and provides a variety of options for patrons.

## 2.5 Measurable Performance

The categories of performance elements shown below are good benchmarks to measure the success of a downtown environment. All of these feed and complement one another.

### Residential population

Residential population within a walkable distance to downtown is a performance measure that can be more critical than design and implementation elements. The diversity of that population is also a key indicator of success.

### Daytime Employment

Daytime employment totals can supplement the lack of residential and is measured as the total employment population in downtown as a percent of the overall community employment. This element is often responsible for the lunch success of the restaurant scene.

### Commercial Activity

In a downtown setting, sales per square foot should be higher than in the suburban areas of the community.

### Pedestrian Activity

A key indicator of success in a downtown environment is the density of pedestrian activity in the core blocks.

### Walkability, Bikability & Access to Transit

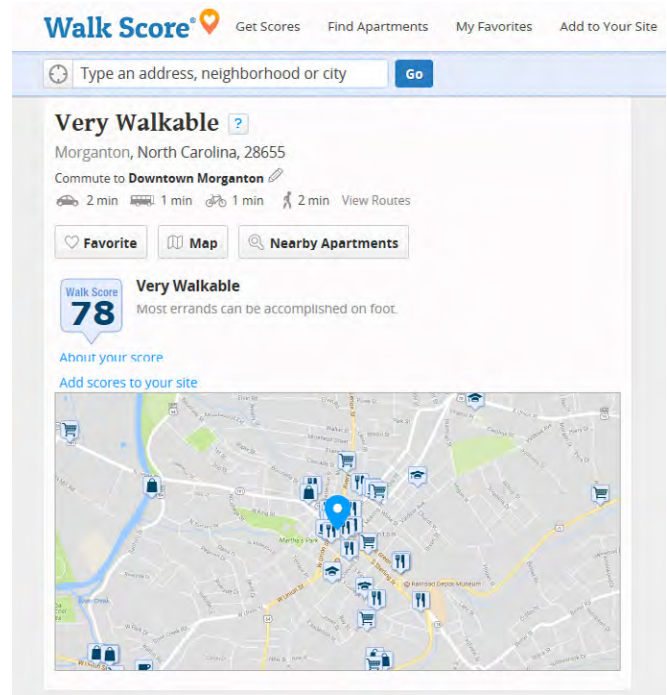
Measuring the walkability, bikability and transit access of downtown are key indicators of multi-modal success. Specifically, achieving a walkable downtown is about the journey and the destination. The journey must be comfortable and well-connected. The destination must be lively and entertaining.

## A Tool to Measure Performance

Walk Score is a useful tool to measure the walkability of an area. The service is supported by a world-class advisory board that focus on walkability, bikability, transit access and public safety. The patented software system allows Walk Score to analyze routes and nearby amenities in order to award points based on distances. Scores range between 0 and 100 with 100 being the most walkable total. They have broken their rankings into categories ranging from paradise to car dependent.

The overall walk score for Morganton is a 25, and the city is described as being “car-dependent”. However, areas closer to the core of downtown have scores as high as 78. This is based on proximity to dining/drinking, groceries, shopping, errand distances, parks, schools, and culture/entertainment options.

The Walk Score site also provides a list of nearby living options and rates their walkability. Once choosing a specific map location, the user is provided detailed lists of amenities such as restaurants with names, addresses and distances. Potential buyers are utilizing this site to determine where they choose to invest their money, particularly in downtown settings.



Walk Score® Get Scores Find Apartments My Favorites Add to Your Site

Type an address, neighborhood or city Go

**Very Walkable** ?  
Morganton, North Carolina, 28655  
Commute to **Downtown Morganton**  
2 min 1 min 1 min 2 min View Routes

Favorite Map Nearby Apartments

Walk Score **78** Very Walkable  
Most errands can be accomplished on foot.

About your score  
Add scores to your site

Walk Score Screen Shot of the Intersection of Union & Sterling Streets  
(Source: www.walkscore.com)

## 2.6 Creating Great Places

Great downtowns are places where people come together.

They include:

- » places to play
- » places to relax
- » places to eat
- » places to shop

Great places are complex, organic, and sometimes messy. Embracing the good mess is often the first step towards vibrancy.



Places to play

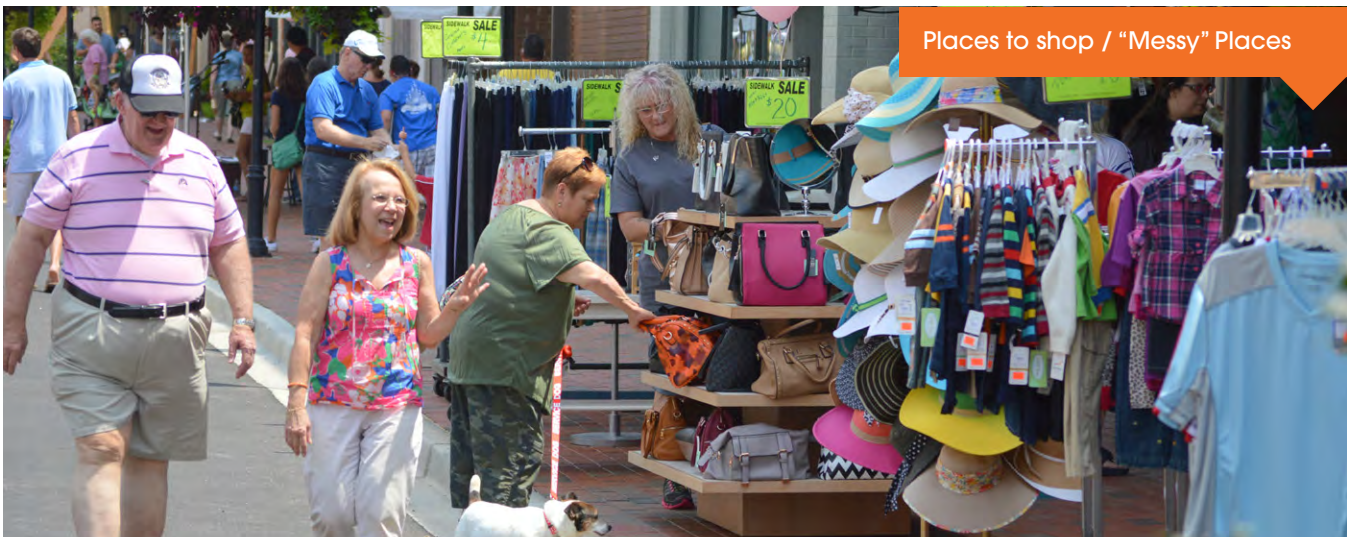


Places to relax

**Top** / Whimsical play space (The Market Common, Myrtle Beach, SC) / **Left** / Comfortable swings (Greenville, SC) / **Right** / Ground Floor Restaurants (Ann Arbor, MI) / **Bottom** / Ground floor retail spilling onto vibrant, “messy” sidewalk (Spartanburg, SC)



Places to eat



Places to shop / “Messy” Places

## 2.7 The 7 “D’s”

Understanding the dynamics that create successful downtowns can often seem mysterious. Why does one place succeed and another does not? It can often feel like the answer is something intangible, because there appears to be no other logical explanation. Decades of working in a range of downtown environments has revealed a set of key attributes that contribute to creating successful places. When these 7 “D’s” combine with strong business owners, capable municipal staff, and political leadership, both economic and social success follow.

**“If you plan cities for cars and traffic, you get cars and traffic. If you plan for people and places, you get people and places.”**

—Fred Kent, Project for Public Spaces



## Destination Accessibility



The easier it is for people to travel to and from downtown Morganton, the more attractive it will be to draw patrons wanting to share experiences and spend money. It is essential to provide adequate wayfinding to not only help people get to the core but also navigate their experience once they arrive.

## Development Density



Small towns such as Morganton typically thrive at a density of 2-4 stories within the core. This is not a hard and fast rule but a good baseline for future development.

## Distance to Transit



Downtowns with access to transit services can accommodate higher volumes of users without adding pressure on parking. Ensuring safe and comfortable journeys from neighborhoods to transit stops is key to user safety.

## Dynamic Activity



Vibrant downtowns are dynamic in nature with a mixture of sidewalk displays, outdoor dining, creative signage, diverse public spaces and enticing window shopping.

## Human-Scaled Details



Several design details are critical to the public realm in downtowns. Some are: pedestrian lighting; seating; landscaping; the arrangement of windows and doors on buildings; and sidewalk width. They contribute to a human scaled environment where people feel comfortable and safe. Designing places for people is a key tenet of successful placemaking.

## Land Use Diversity



Highly active downtowns not only need a mix of uses within the core but also a significant number of residential units and employment centers within a five to ten minute walk. This diversity of land uses contributes to the number of people within walking distance to downtown retail and public amenities.

## Street Design



Downtown streets should accommodate two-way, multi-modal traffic flow and provide on-street parking for retail patrons. Streets should include comfortable sidewalks for pedestrians with street trees and a variety of furnishings.



# 3

## Existing Conditions

**Planning Efforts**

**Area Geography & Population**

**Infrastructure Analysis**

**Topography and Floodplain**

**Gateways**

**Planning Analysis**

**Public Art**

### 3.1 Planning Efforts

Morganton has traditionally been the hub of economic development in Burke County, and in the mid-1990s, community leaders felt downtown had the potential to be a more vital and vibrant center for the community.

In 1996, the Morganton City Council appointed the Main Street Advisory Committee and engaged a consulting firm to lead a visioning process for Downtown Morganton. Over a period of 18 months, some 350 community members were involved in research, discussion, and planning that collectively formed a strategic plan for downtown's future called The Master Plan.

### Success Stories Since the 1997 Plan

**Many positive improvements to downtown have occurred since the 1997 plan, including:**

From 1997 - 2007 several public/private partnerships were completed as a result of the 1997 Master Plan:

- » Mill Restoration Mixed Use
- » New Construction Mixed Use
- » Non-Profit Offices
- » Senior Living Facilities
- » Multi-Plex Movie Theater
- » Second Floor Residential
- » Multi-Family Residential
- » Amateur Sports Facility
- » Greenway/Commercial Center
- » Single-Family Subdivisions

**The 1997  
Master Plan  
has yielded  
\$34 million  
in private  
investment  
and \$8 million  
in public  
investment!**



1997 Downtown Morganton Master Plan



Additionally, several new businesses have been attracted to downtown in recent years. Some of these businesses have taken advantage of funding assistance through the Main Street Solutions Fund Revolving Loan & Grant Program, HUD funding, VEDIC (an Equal Opportunity Lender), USDA Intermediary Re-Lending Program IRP, USDA Micro-Entrepreneur Assistance Program RMAP, Valdese Revolving Loan Program, and the Burke Business Loan Program.

**New businesses since 2010 include:**

- » Root and Vine
- » Grind Café
- » Jake’s
- » Murrays Restaurant
- » My Local Bakery
- » Hamilton Williams Gallery & Studio (community kiln)
- » Fonta Flora (expansion)
- » Brown Mountain Bottleworks
- » Catawba Brewing
- » Treat
- » Community House (Community Kitchen)
- » Food Matters
- » Oak Hill Ironworks (retail store)



**Top** / Brown Mountain Bottleworks, a local bottle shop / **Middle** / Oak Hill Ironworks, downtown retail shop / **Bottom** / Marquee Cinemas, a multi-plex movie theater

## Other Relevant Plans

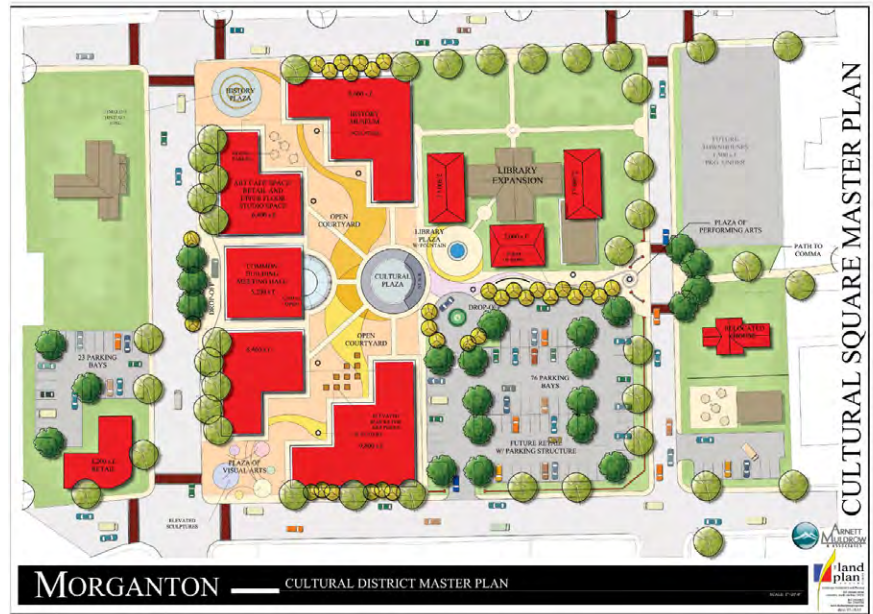
### 2016 (Re)Imaging Broughton Reuse Study

In 2014, the NC General Assembly enacted legislation which directed state, county, and city governments to begin studying the 800 acres of publicly-owned property just outside of downtown Morganton. The area has been home to the Broughton Hospital for mental health since the late 19th century, and the school for the deaf. A team led by Development Finance Initiative (DFI) has been working through the analysis and master plan study. The findings concluded that a comprehensive district approach will yield the greatest economic and social benefit to all involved. The campus will include the existing School for the Deaf, Western Piedmont Community College, the new Broughton Hospital, with the North Carolina School of Science and Math Western Campus, a variety of housing, recreation amenities, active agriculture, and perhaps a small mixed use hospitality village added over time.



## 2005 Cultural District Master Plan

The series of blocks bounded by King and College Streets were investigated as part of the Cultural District Master Plan in 2005. The area has a concentration of civic and cultural uses including the history museum, public library, City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium (CoMMA). New program elements explored included expansions of existing facilities, a Commons Hall, an Arts Building and a Cultural Building. Consolidated parking for the district and new public plazas unify the area. The vision includes both public and private investments totaling \$14 million occurring incrementally over time.



Developing the Identity: A Marketing & Branding Strategy

Creating the Setting: A Public Investment Strategy

Fostering Investment: A Private Development Strategy

Creating the Legacy: A Fundraising Strategy

Cultural District Master Plan Implementation Strategy



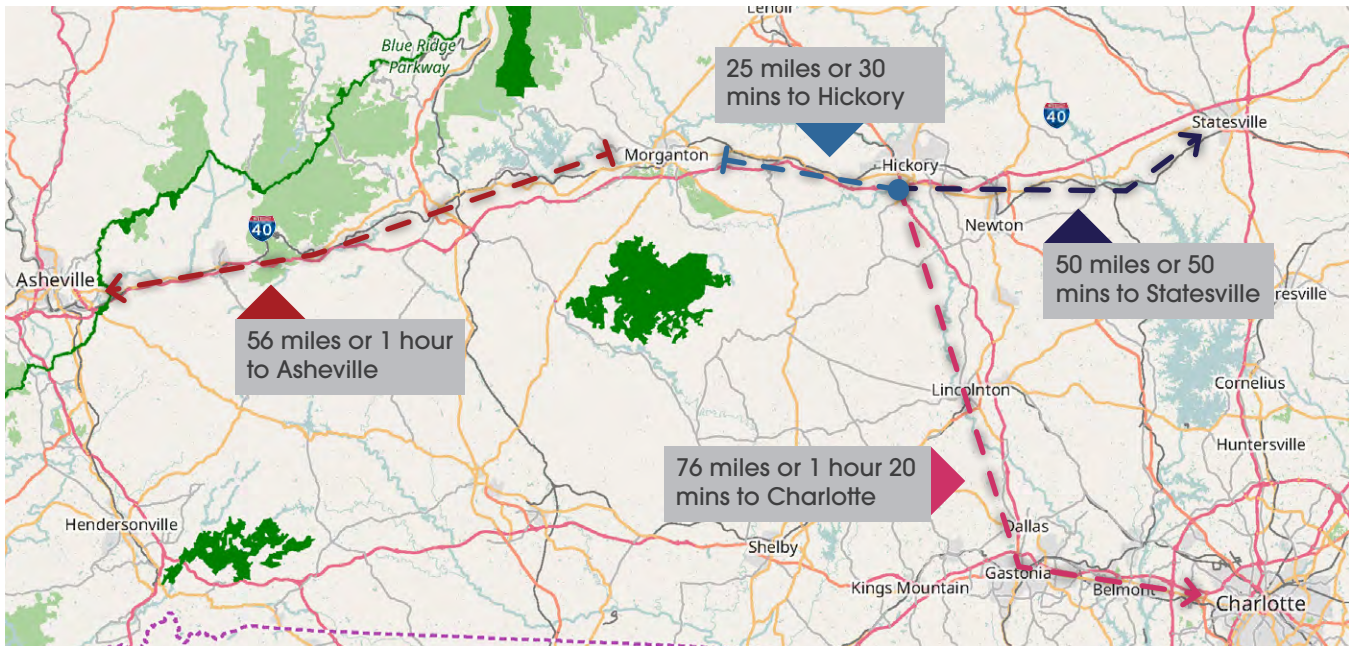
Graphics from the 2005 Cultural District Master Plan courtesy of Arnett Muldrow & Associates + The Land Plan



### 3.2 Area Geography & Population

Morganton is located in western North Carolina along the Catawba River in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Pisgah National Forest is nearby and the area is abundant with scenic views of nearby mountains and outdoor adventure opportunities. It is also within an hour drive of other scenic mountain towns like Boone and Blowing Rock and the nationally renowned city of Asheville.

The downtown Morganton special tax district is roughly 40 blocks and 156 acres in size. The historic center of town is at the intersection of Sterling Street (NC 64) and Meeting Street (NC 70), but most would agree that the true center of downtown is one block northwest at Union Street and Sterling Street. Downtown is anchored by The Courthouse Square, the site of the historic courthouse which still stands in good condition. Along with an array of unique, small shops and businesses, downtown is known for its craft breweries and taprooms, banks and a seven-screen, first-run movie theater.



**Top** / Regional diagram with distances and drive-times to major cities in the Morganton region

**Above**, left to right / The Catawba River, a natural amenity that is linked to the identity of the city / Fonta Flora Brewery — a regional draw for the craft brew scene / A view of the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance entering the city from the southeast

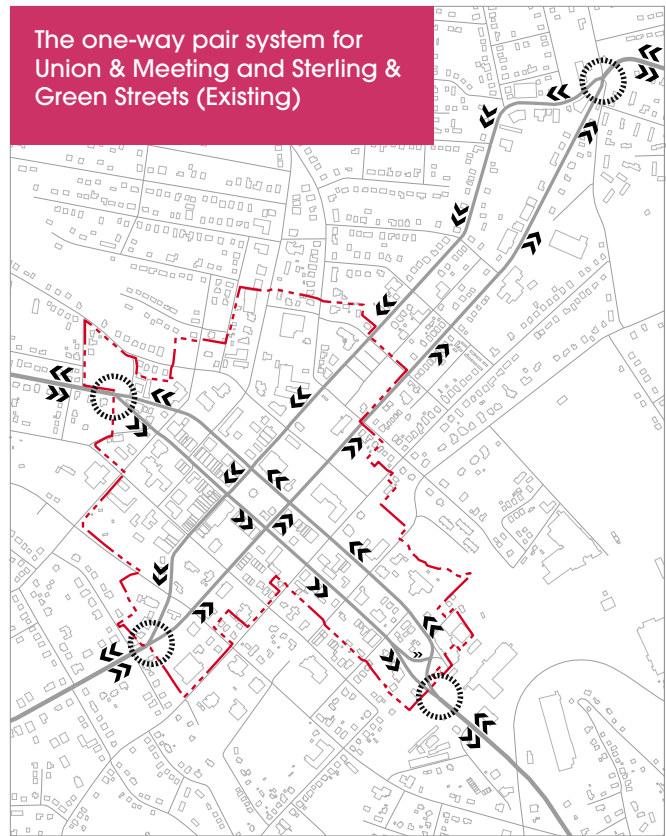
ESTIMATED 2016 POPULATION	
Morganton	16,665
Boone	18,834
Statesville	26,505
Hickory	40,567
Asheville	89,121

Source: [factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov)

### 3.3 Infrastructure Analysis

#### One Way Pairs

A set of one way pairs currently dominate the circulation pattern of downtown. The infrastructure was historically designed for two way travel; however, the city converted its streets to one-way operation in the 1960s. Many downtowns did this before the completion of other state highways and interstates in an effort to move more vehicles at a higher rate through the area. During this era, suburban residential housing was on the rise and increasingly people began to live farther away from the downtown. This trend was one contributor to the demise of urban centers; nevertheless, high quality pedestrian and retail environments are returning to their former glory. Converting the one way pairs in downtown Morganton will be a topic of discussion further explored in later chapters.



**Top** / One-way pair E. Union Street / **Above** / One-way pair on E. Meeting Street

**Top** / One-way pair on Green Street / **Above** / One-way pair on Sterling Street

## Public Spaces and Connectivity

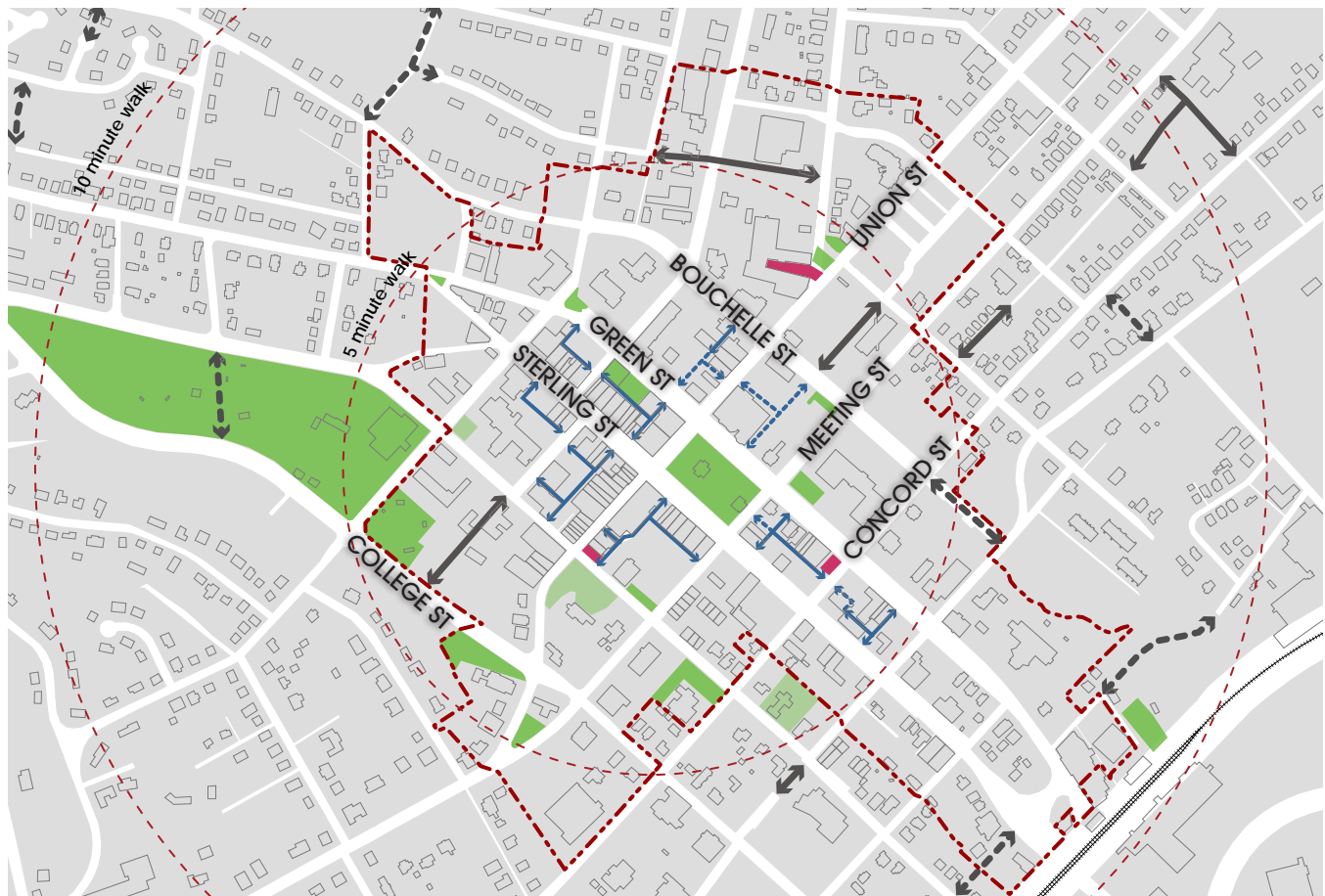
Downtown Morganton has a wide variety of public spaces, mostly in the form of parks. A few urban plazas exist, but downtown is in need of more public space of this type. Perhaps the most notable downtown public spaces are Martha's Park and Courthouse Square. The Collett Street Recreation Center and Gene Turner Park are on the outskirts of downtown and have a wide range of amenities including the Japanese Garden. City Hall Plaza is the most notable hardscaped public space, but it is quite underutilized, largely void of any amenities like seating and is only

lightly programmed. Interestingly, during this planning process, the public noted that downtown is in need of more small plaza-like gathering spaces like this one.

Downtown Morganton's alleys also play a critical role in the public space offering. They improve mid-block pedestrian connectivity informally and are also home to some interesting public art murals. A notable alley is behind businesses that face W. Union Street between Green and Sterling Streets. During this planning process, various businesses like Brown Mountain Bottleworks and others were installing rear patio seating areas in the alley.

### LEGEND

-  Missing Road Connections
-  Missing Pedestrian Connections
-  Potential Alley Connections/Improvements
-  Existing Alley Network
-  Existing Plazas
-  Existing Public Open Space
-  Existing Private Open Space
-  5-10 min Walk Rings



Public spaces and connectivity diagram showing potential and existing alley and road connections, as well as existing parks, plazas and private open space.

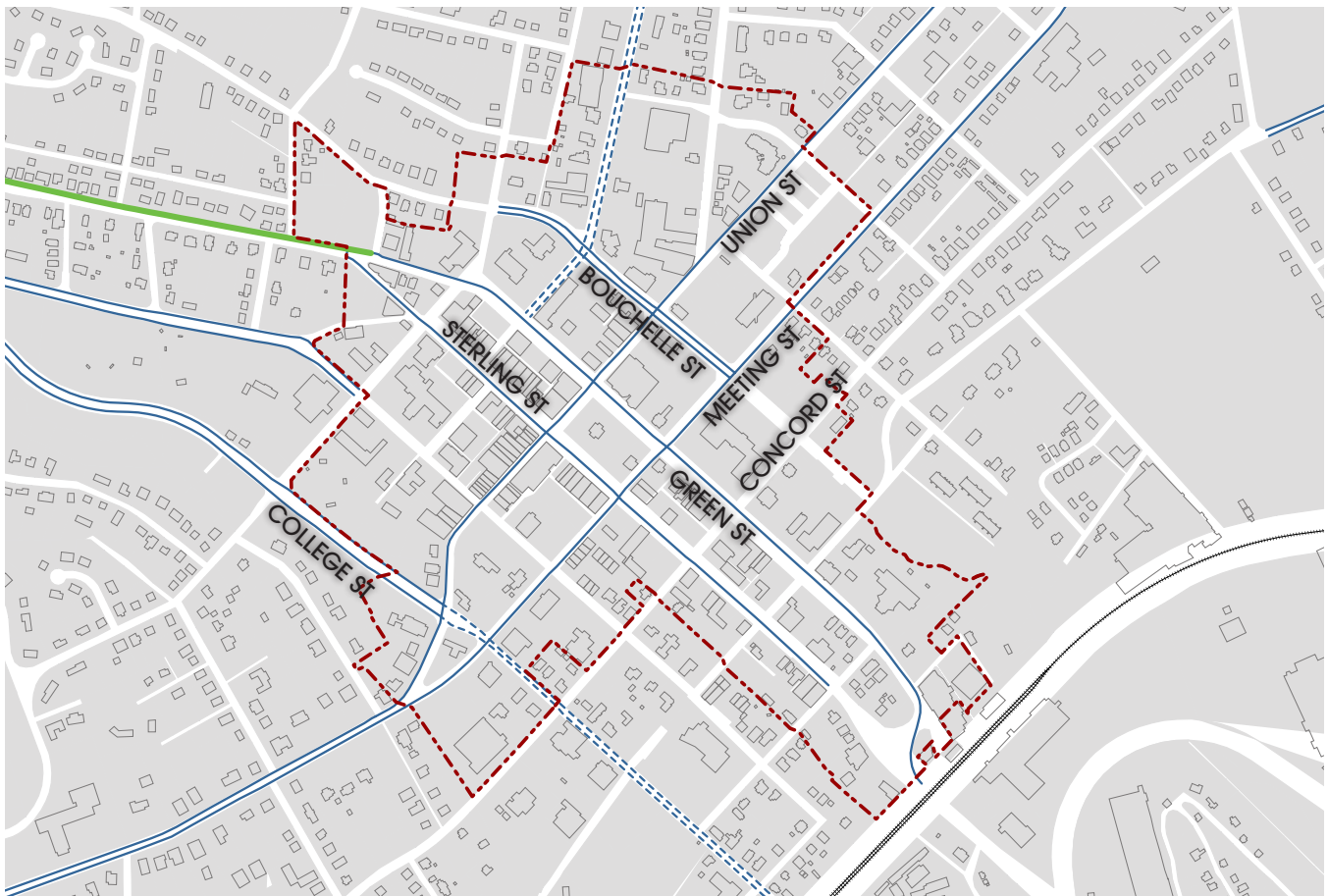
### LEGEND

- Existing Greenway
- Existing Bike Lanes
- Existing Shared Bike Facilities

### Bike Facilities and Greenways

One greenway currently exists in downtown Morganton. It is a wide asphalt path at the back-of-curb located along the north side of N. Green Street running from the intersection of Fleming Street to the intersection of N. College Street. The greenway is planned to extend to the west and connect

downtown to Catawba Meadows Park and the Catawba River Greenway. Downtown is well served with bike lanes along its major roads and shared bike lanes on a few roads with lower traffic volumes.

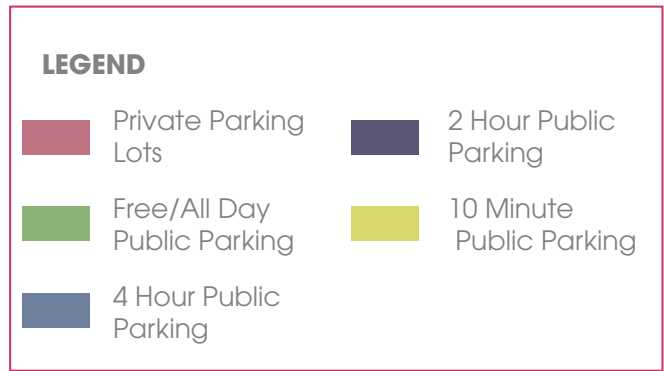


Greenways, bike lanes, and shared bike facilities within and leading to downtown from the surrounding neighborhoods

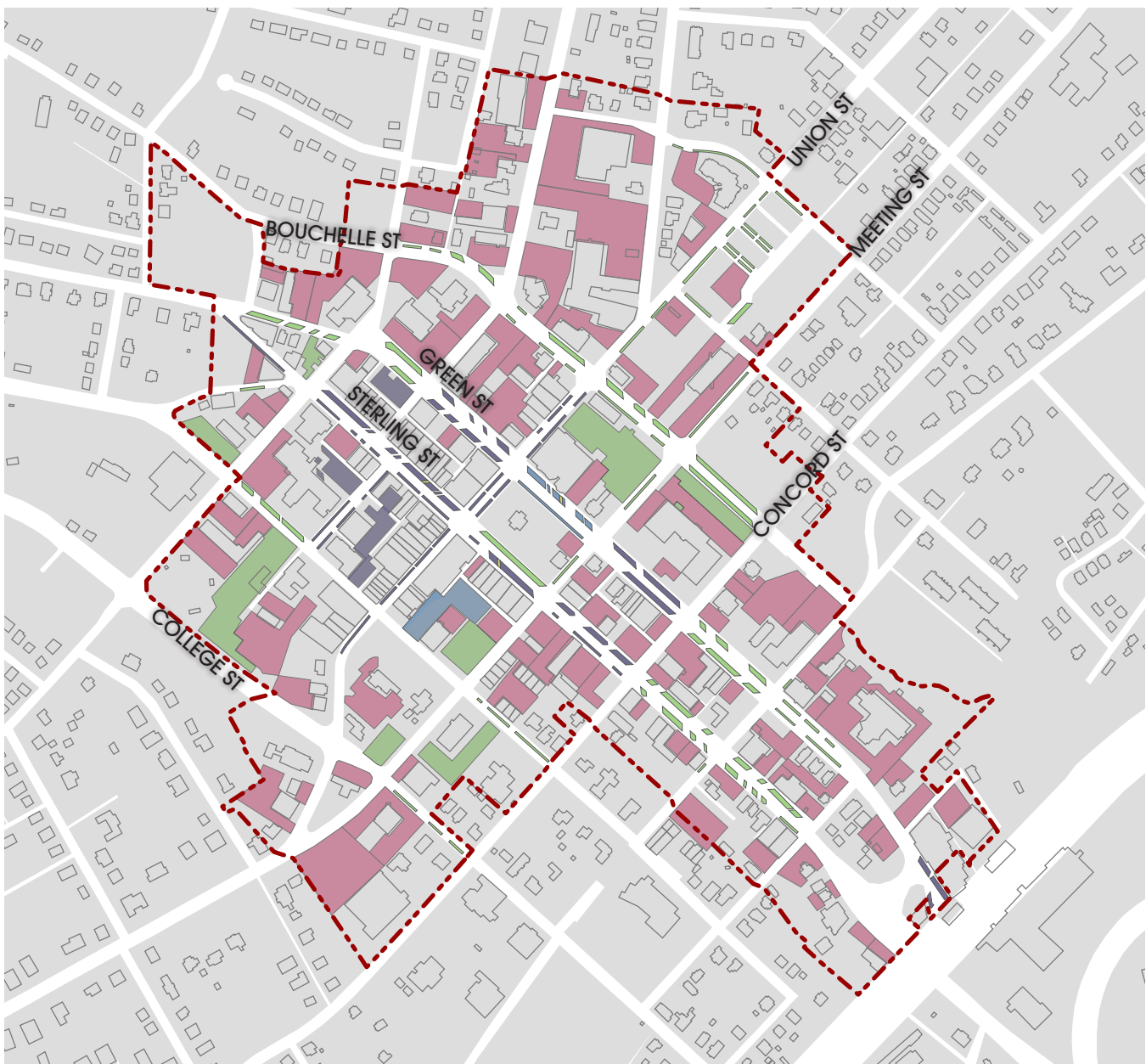


## Parking

Downtown Morganton has a plethora of parking (though it may not be as well-located as some would prefer). In many blocks, there seems to be more parking lot area than there is building area. Most parking areas are privately owned, but there are several public parking lots that are well distributed throughout downtown. Additionally, most blocks have either parallel or diagonal on street parking. There are no structured parking facilities.



Existing Public and Private Parking diagram depicting public parking lots and on-street parking by time limits (all day, 4 hour, 2 hour, and 10 minute)





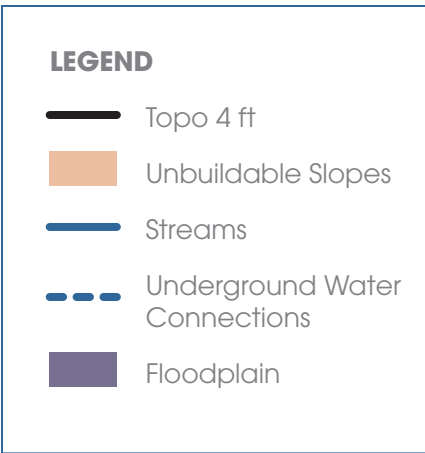
### 3.4 Topography and Floodplain

Most of downtown Morganton is gently sloping, but there are some steeper areas which impact connectivity and developable land as well as pedestrian and bike mobility. One steep area is located along a stream corridor at the western edge of downtown just south of Gene Turner Park and

N. College Street. Another is on the east side of downtown to the north of the shops at Morganton Station and the existing farmer's market. Other areas worth noting with limited developable land are those properties along the south side of S. Sterling Street near Collett Street and from Concord Street eastward.



Topography and Floodplain map shows areas severely sloped areas (tinted orange) and areas within a floodplain (tinted dark blue)

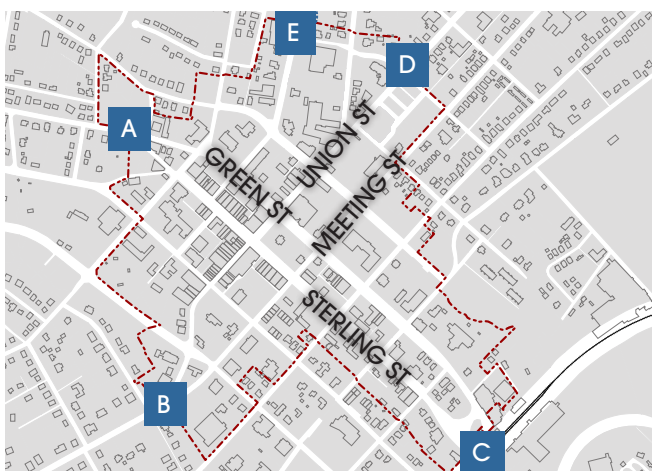


### 3.5 Gateways

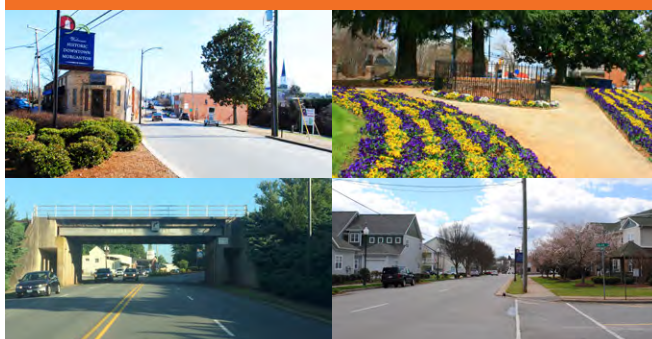
Gateways are the front porch of a community. They are key entry points to an area and should be significant, iconic and memorable components of the community. Downtown Morganton has several gateways, some more inviting and memorable than others, but all of which have opportunities for improvement. Gateways should be enhanced with elements that give visitors a sense of arrival and mark the entry to downtown.

**The key gateways are:**

- A. S. Sterling Street & S. Green Street Intersection - 10,000 ADT (average daily traffic)
- B. N. Green Street & N. Sterling Street - 7,700 ADT
- C. Avery Ave & Short Street - 7,700 ADT
- D. W. Meeting Street & W. Union Street - 4,700 ADT
- E. E. Union Street & Gillam Street - 4,300 ADT



**Above /** Gateway locations  
**Below /** Gateway Photos (A, B, C, & D)



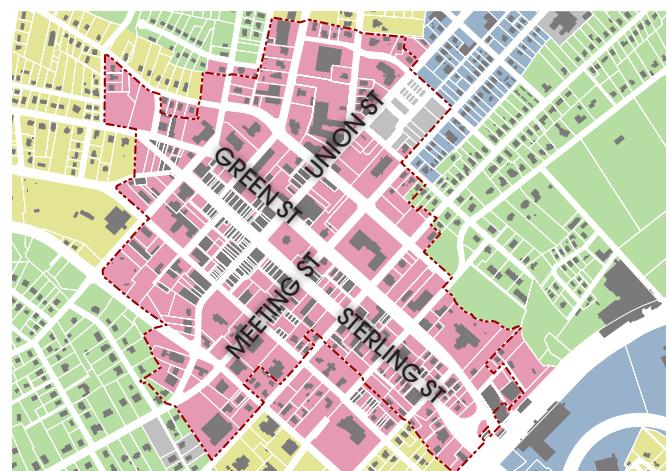
### 3.6 Planning Analysis

#### Zoning

Morganton’s zoning districts are designed to provide for a variety of uses that are appropriate to the character of the areas in which they are located. Downtown is predominately zoned Central Business District (CBD). According to the code:





*“The Central Business District is established to protect and promote the continued vitality of downtown Morganton. It is the intent of this district to provide a concentration of activities in a pedestrian-oriented setting. These activities include retail trade, office, and professional service uses as well as high density residential.”*

Properties on the northern edge of downtown in the block bordered by White Street, E. Union Street, Church Street and E. Meeting Street are zoned Conditional Use supporting a planned mixed use development in the area. Downtown Morganton is bordered by mostly residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors with a mix of neighborhood service retail and residential uses along them.



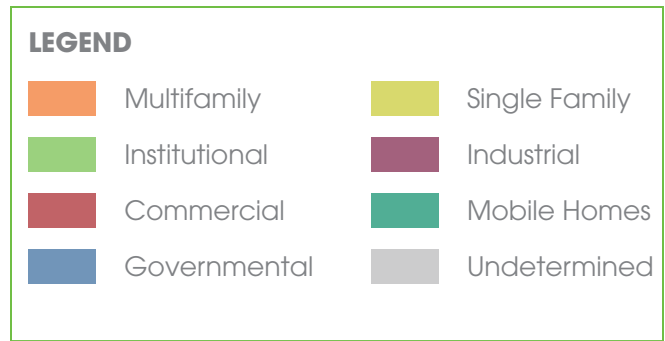
Zoning Map | Most of the downtown tax district is within the CBD

**LEGEND**

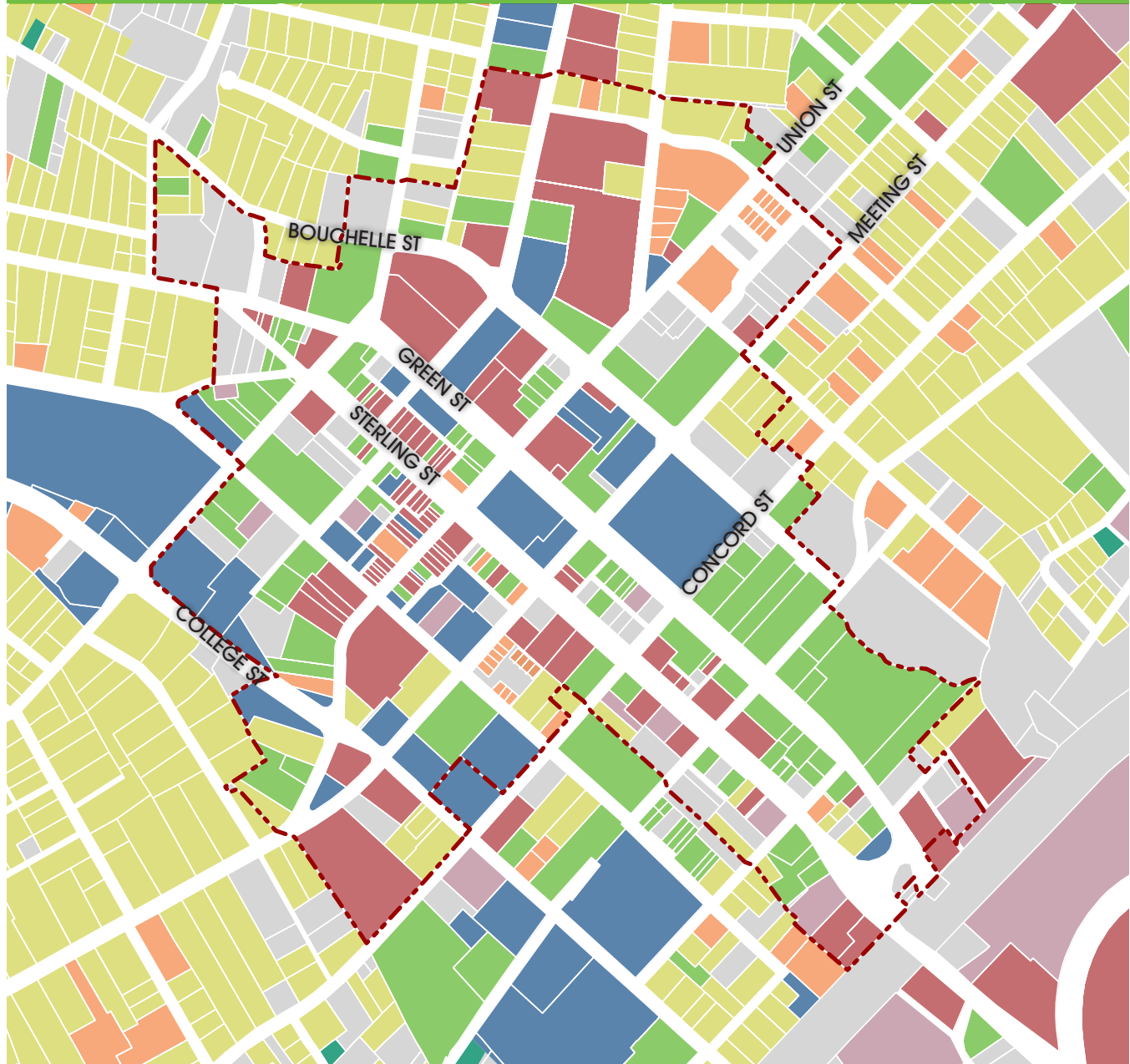
 Central Business District (CBD)	 High Intensity District (HID)
 Low Intensity District (LID)	 Conditional Use District (CU)
 Medium Intensity District (MID)	

## Land Use

Much of downtown Morganton's land uses fall in the Institutional (e.g., churches), Commercial (e.g., cafes, banks, shops) and Governmental (e.g., City Hall, Martha's Park) categories. Other land uses are sprinkled into the downtown landscape including Single Family (e.g., detached residential house), Multi-family (e.g., townhomes) and Industrial (e.g., Catawba Brewing, commercial dry cleaners).



The Land Use Map shows the different land uses in and around downtown Morganton. The majority of downtown is Institutional (green), Commercial (red), or Governmental (blue). Many commercial uses, which drive vibrancy and activity, are within the core near the intersection of N. Sterling and W. Union Streets.



## Ripe and Firm Analysis

A ripe and firm analysis was conducted on all parcels in the study area in 2017. To complete this analysis, a windshield survey was conducted for each parcel and the development that currently occupies it. Each parcel is classified into one of three categories: firm, opportunity or ripe. This analysis is used to identify areas both likely and unlikely to change. Often, there are areas that are not clearly one or the other and are identified simply as opportunities.

### Firm

- » Existing multi-story, mixed use buildings with historic character and architectural significance, built up to the street with active ground floor uses
- » Fully occupied with tenant mix that supports vibrancy

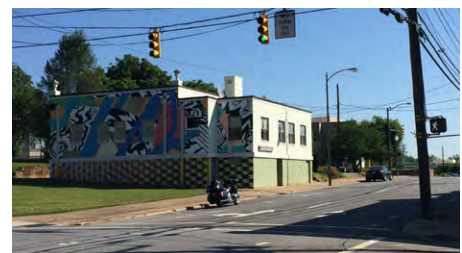
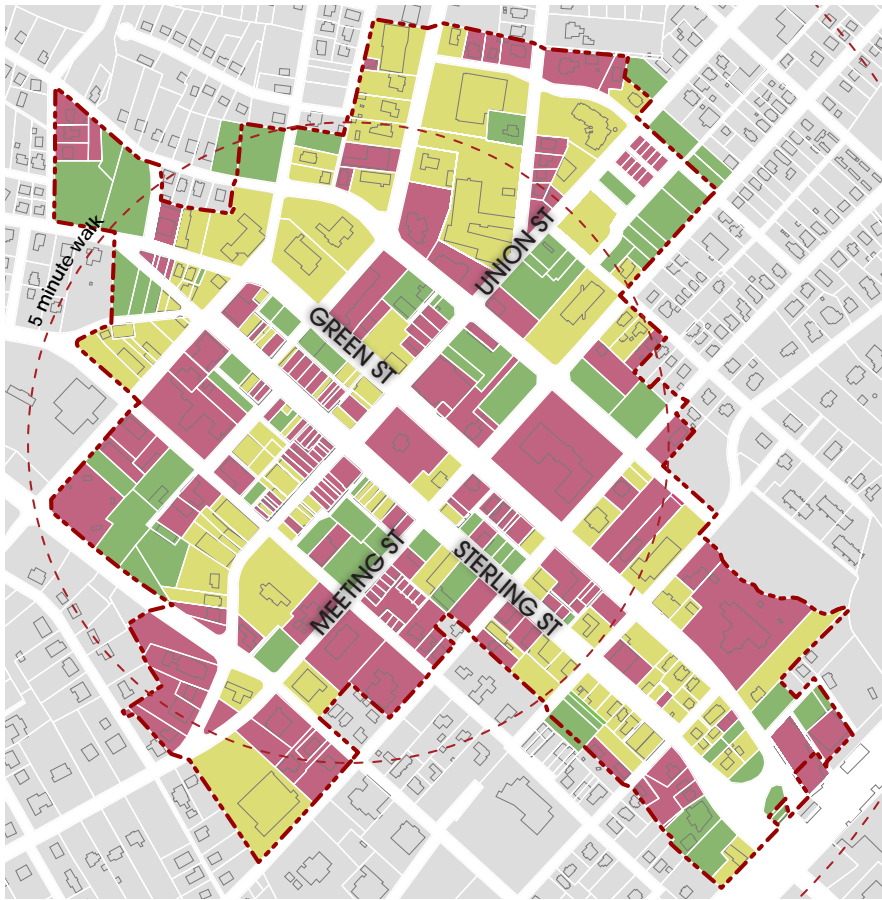
### Opportunity

- » Underutilized property, but currently occupied
- » Current use is not conducive or additive to a vibrant and walkable downtown

- » Classified as an ‘opportunity’ because the parcel would have a more positive impact on the success of the downtown with a highly active use

### Ripe

- » Vacant parcel at the edge of the downtown historic core
- » Not currently utilized for formal parking and is well-suited for a variety of significant development opportunities



**Above** / Ripe and Firm Analysis for downtown Morganton **Right**, top to bottom / Firm property - The Grind Cafe on the corner of W. Union and N. King Streets / Opportunity property - Flex building currently housing the Burke Arts Council in Courthouse Square / Ripe property - Vacant lot for sale on N. Sterling Street, behind Fonta Flora Brewery

**LEGEND**

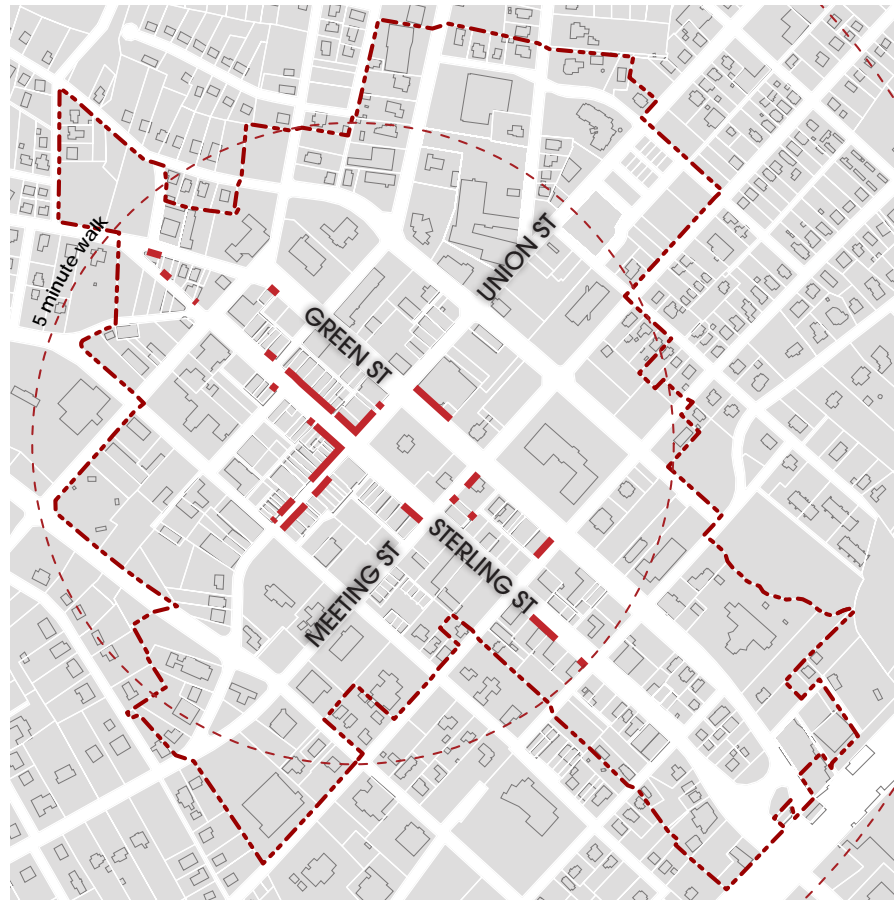
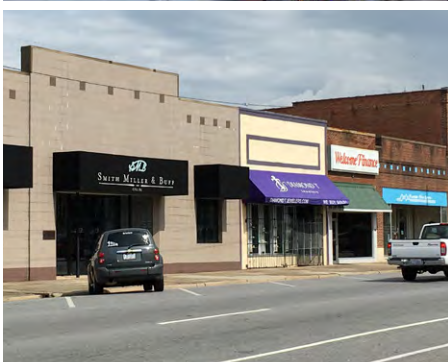
- Firm
- Opportunity
- Ripe

## Active Frontages

Active ground floor uses are critical to a vibrant downtown. Not only do the uses need to be active, but ideally, they should align closely with the desired character that downtown Morganton is pursuing and that which is desired by potential visitors. As pedestrians and visitors walk or drive down Union Street, for example, they need to see other people visibly enjoying themselves in the downtown; this is a compounding effect - people beget people.

Determining active frontages is not an exact science, but in general, frontages that draw people in and out at a variety of times during the day and week are determined active; which mean the hours of operation in an active district should compliment one another. Additionally, they are typically associated with food & beverage, entertainment and retail uses. For example, in general, office uses are not the most appropriate for ground floor spaces along major downtown streets, as they do not generate

consistent patronage like a retail shop might. They are essential for urban life and provide employment opportunities, but they could be located on upper floors or side streets. Cafes, coffee shops, brew pubs and small shops are considered active frontages, because they activate the street, especially if outdoor seating is present. They also encourage cluster shopping between establishments which can create a district of activity rather than a single successful node.



**Left, top to bottom /** Active frontage with outdoor seating along W. Union Street / Active frontage with movable seating and transparent glazing along E. Union Street / Frontages along N. Sterling Street that are not "active"

**Above /** Diagram identifying active frontages (bright red lines) in downtown

### 3.7 Public Art

Art in the downtown today consists of:

- » Murals
- » Mosaics
- » Window Paintings
- » Statues
- » Benches
- » Iconic Gateways
- » Fountains

The local artist pool runs deep in Morganton and the diverse artistic expressions are eclectic and beautiful. They are located in a variety of public and private places. Murals brighten up otherwise dark and frightening alleys, memorial statues formalize open green spaces and add educational elements for visitors, artistic benches express the local natural inspirations like Table Rock, and interactive fountains make active parks more enjoyable on a summer day. Each piece of artwork adds to the creative identity of the city and helps tell the story of downtown Morganton.



**Top, left to right /** Diamonds Mural and iron gates in alley between Gregory Jewelers and Benjamin's & Libba's of Morganton / WWII Memorial in front of Burke County Court House  
**Left /** Mimosa Kaleidoscope sculpture along N. Sterling Street  
**Right /** Mural behind Wisteria  
**Below /** Mural along the old Kimbrell building on N. King Street





Existing Public Art in Downtown Morganton

**LEGEND**

**Benches**

- 1. Table Rock & Hawksbill
- 2. Film Reel
- 3. Memorial Butterfly
- 4. Concave & Convex Ribbon
- 5. Hammered Rod
- 6. Table Rock Silhouette
- 7. Reclaimed Tank
- 8. Milton Brittain Memorial Leaf
- 9. Butterfly

**Historic Statues/Monuments**

- 1. General Daniel Morgan Bust & Portrait

- 2. Confederate Soldier Memorial & Statue
- 3. Senator Sam Statue & Quote Plaques
- 4. WWII Memorial
- 5. Etta Baker

**Murals & Mosaics**

- 1. Graffiti Window Paintings
- 2. Trompe L'oreil Painting & Gregory Jewels Mural
- 3. Window & Wall Mosaics/ Arts Council Mural
- 4. Wisterial Mural
- 5. Grecian Mural & Window Painting
- 6. Butterfly & Flower Mosaic
- 7. Trompe L'oreil Mural

- 8. Root & Vine Mural
- 9. Sacred Dance/Muses Fresco

**Other Art**

- 1. Light Molecule Sculpture
- 2. Board of Realtors Bike Rack
- 3. Iron Gateway
- 4. Sidewalk Steel Panel Bar
- 5. Mimosa Kaleidoscope
- 6. Iron Bollards
- 7. Flower Gates
- 8. Butterfly Gates, Elephant Dragon & Splash Pad
- 9. Bronze Child
- 10. Grace Episcopal Labyrinth
- 11. Ad Valorem Ad Nauseum
- 12. Dolphin Fountain Sculpture





# 4

## **Public Engagement**

**Online Survey**

**Focus Group Meetings**

**Biking & Walking Tours and Bike  
Audit**

**The Charrette**

**Final Presentation**



## 4.1 Engagement Overview

The planning process for the Morganton Downtown Vision Plan involved several outreach strategies and opportunities for the citizens of Morganton to participate. The result was a meaningful dialogue that helped shape the vision for Morganton's downtown. Outreach tools included an online survey, focus group meetings, walking and biking tours, taphouse events, a youth exercise, and live polling. The cornerstone event was the week-long design charrette. During that time, the team conducted stakeholder

interviews, held an open design studio, built a temporary parklet, and presented ideas at pin-up sessions. The team returned a few weeks later to summarize the initial recommendations of the vision plan during a public meeting attended by 400+ individuals.

## 4.2 Online Survey

An anonymous survey was issued online from March 8<sup>th</sup> to June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 with four questions posed to influence decisions in the final master plan. The responses were confidential and data reported only to the consultant team.

The four questions were as follows:

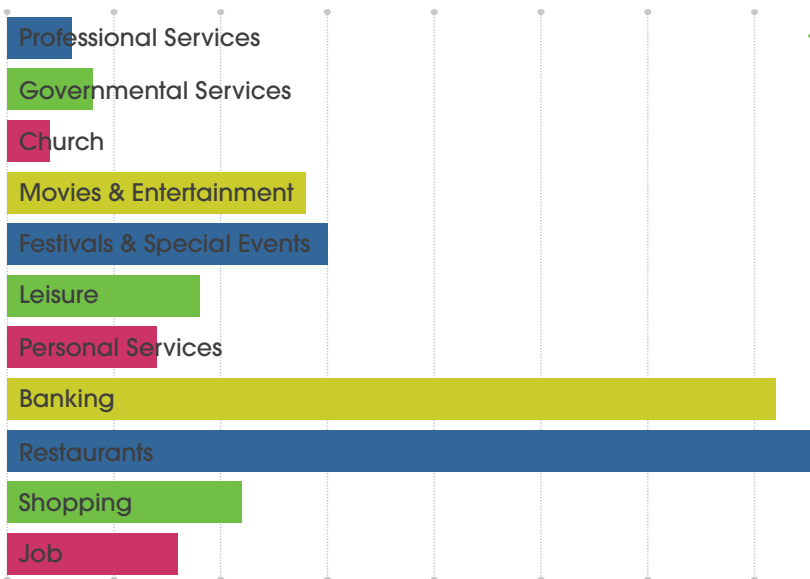
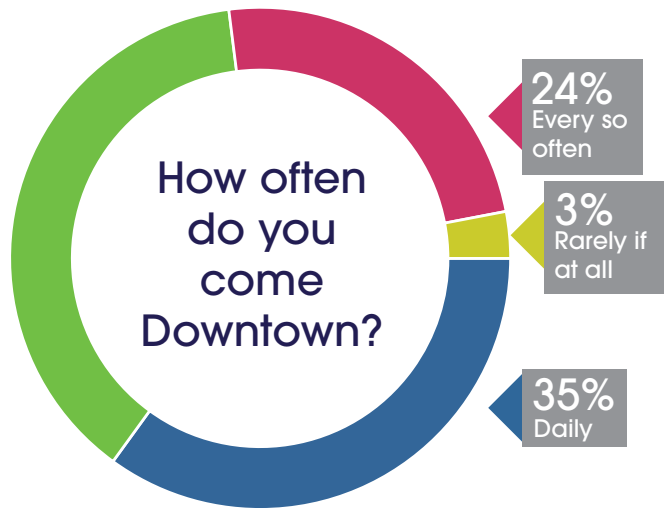
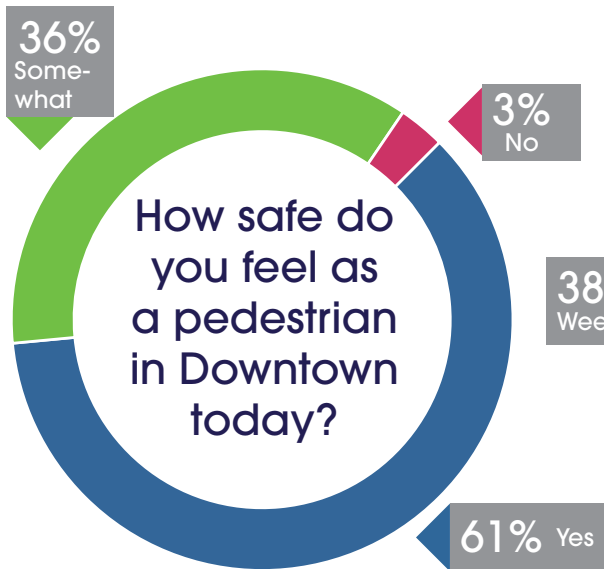
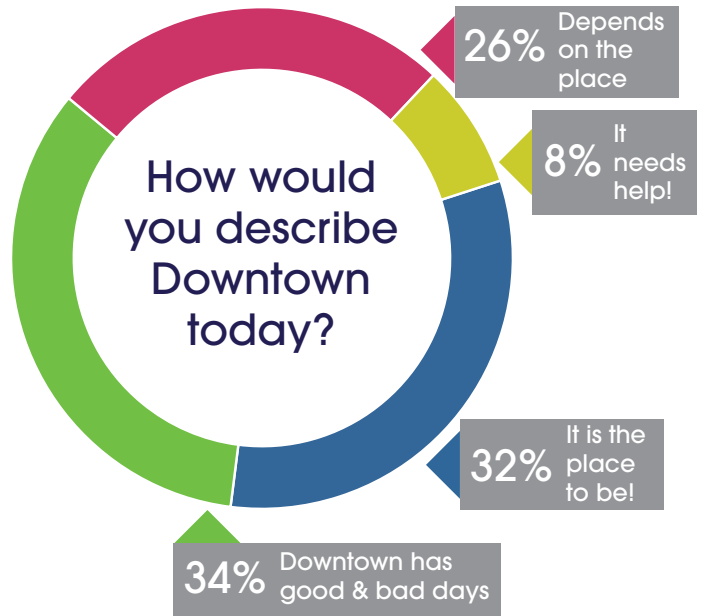
- » How would you describe Downtown Morganton today?
- » How safe do you feel as a pedestrian in Downtown Morganton today?
- » How often do you come downtown?
- » What activities bring you to Downtown Morganton?



**Top**, left to right / Citizens write what they love about Morganton on the chalkboard during the charrette / Charrette signs inviting the public inside **Bottom**, left to right / Stakeholders and citizens discuss ideas during the charrette / Design team members carrying drawings down Sterling Street to a public meeting

## Survey Results

The online survey was completed by over 500 participants! The results show confidence and a high level of satisfaction with downtown today. However, there is still room for improvement with only 61% of those surveyed who feel completely safe as a pedestrian. Over half of those surveyed come downtown daily or weekly, presumably for the highest documented activities which are dining and banking. The next highest count for activities in downtown are festivals and special events, as well as movies and entertainment.



### What activities bring you to Downtown Morganton?

Order from highest to lowest:

- » Restaurants
- » Banking
- » Festivals & Special Events
- » Movies & Entertainment
- » Shopping
- » Leisure
- » Job
- » Personal Services
- » Governmental Services
- » Professional Services
- » Church

### 4.3 Focus Group Meetings

The design team conducted a reconnaissance trip that included three days of stakeholder interviews from March 27<sup>th</sup> to March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The meetings were focused around various topics including: planning, public art, civic leadership, infrastructure, and many others. City staff identified and invited more than 250 specific individuals to participate including local merchants, realtors, elected officials, and property owners. The following key takeaways are not necessarily the consensus of the entire group but represent individual ideas that were brought forward.

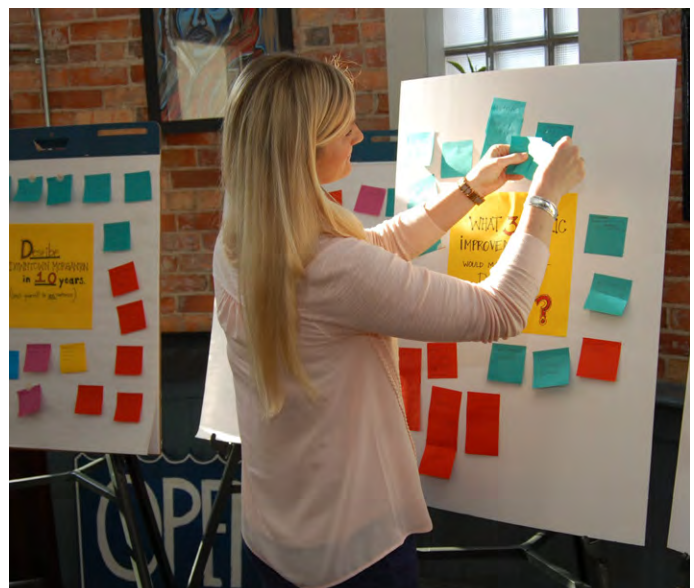
**Key takeaways are summarized below:**

#### Planning and Zoning

- » Maximum residential density is an issue
- » Current height limit for buildings in downtown is 35 ft to 65 ft with performance standards
- » Desire to protect views of the mountains and the old courthouse which are 360 degrees
- » Desire more second floors developed
- » Currently an overlay on Union Street prohibiting B&Bs, but lodging demand is higher than supply
- » Recent implementation of no parking requirement in the downtown area is a positive change



**Top**, left to right / Art Focus Group Meeting at Catawba Brewing / Focus Group Meeting at Fonta Flora **Bottom**, left to right / Steering Committee Meeting at Fonta Flora / Design team member adding comments to board during open discussion “What 3 Public Improvements Would Make the Biggest Difference Downtown?”



- » Must enhance College Street for bicycle access to Green Street bicycle connector with plans to extend to the new elementary school
- » Need facade design regulations

### Public Art

- » Performing arts: ample live music, need outdoor music venue, missing regional performance theater
- » Connect downtown art community to Western Piedmont Community College
- » City Hall, with its high ceilings, ideally used as curated art studio as often as possible
- » No current registry for the area's professional artists
- » See cultural district plan to connect COMMA to downtown
- » Replace the Arts Council building with an events space and permanent amphitheater
- » Desire to embed art into natural resources and amenities
- » Lack of studio/maker spaces
- » Consider using dragons as a local icon

### Civic Leadership

- » Need more places to live, boutique type stores, medium sized music venue, green space, and lodging in downtown
- » Parking is viewed as a challenge by some

- » Need consistent hours of operation
- » Need pedestrian wayfinding to help navigate
- » Every building in the downtown has a story that is worth telling, but what does that look like?
- » The Mission station provides a social network for indigent population
- » Don't have any adaptive services for the blind or deaf in downtown

### Residential

- » No quality rental market in downtown
- » Homes within a reasonable price range (\$150,000 - \$350,000) need updating.
- » Desire to convert the second floors into housing opportunities
- » Handful of people own many of the buildings in the downtown
- » Introduce temporary housing for summer recreation opportunities with month to month leases

### Finance

- » WPCC has a small business center downtown
- » Provide some elementary education for financial literacy
- » Difficult to give small business bank loans, but they can get up to \$50,000 on a credit card (based on credit score).

### Infrastructure

- » Water/Sewer: recently upgraded primary water line, many clay pipes in core, no capacity in downtown, need for irrigation
- » Stormwater: drainage issues down Sterling Street and under the railroad underpass, interest in LID
- » Electric: little went underground during streetscape improvements and no extra conduits installed
- » Cable: everything is overhead
- » Sanitation: mostly street cans not dumpsters, need pet waste stations
- » NCDOT: signals are limiting changes, projects include: Hwy 181 widening, Exit 100 and 103 replacement, and Railroad bridge replacement at Fleming Street

### Broughton Campus

- » Connect to downtown (via College Street)
- » Opportunities for the NC School of Science and Math and WPCC to share buildings on campus
- » Desire quality rental housing component



Focus group meetings at Fonta Flora Brewery & Catawba Brewery

### Word Bubble Results

During the focus group meetings, a few questions were posed on boards for interested parties to add their thoughts over the three day span. The following ‘wordles’ were created from the compilation of comments. The larger the word appears, the more often the topic was listed. For example, in “describe Downtown Morganton in 10 years”, the most often listed topic was “retail.” This topic was brought up many times concerning the current lack

of retail in downtown and the desire for more retail to exist in the future.

### Other Communities Considered Models of Success

One important question asked during the focus group meetings was, “What are other communities you would consider a model of success?” The answers ranged from other local mountain towns to foreign coastal paradises. But the underlying theme was the same: successful

communities are those that identify with the local natural resources and culture. The cities listed most often were Asheville, Blowing Rock, and Greenville, SC. These local precedents built identities that revolve around local resources. Asheville, for example, has become an iconic mountain city with a thriving art and brewery scene. Greenville, SC, also transformed the city’s identity by daylighting Reedy Falls into a one-of-a-kind public space in the heart of downtown.

What Other Communities Do You Consider to be Models of Success?



Local Models for Successful Communities, left to right / Asheville, NC / Blowing Rock, NC / Greenville, SC



Describe Downtown in 10 Years



What 3 Public Improvements Would Make the Biggest Difference Downtown?



If You Had a Magic Wand, What Would You Change about Downtown?

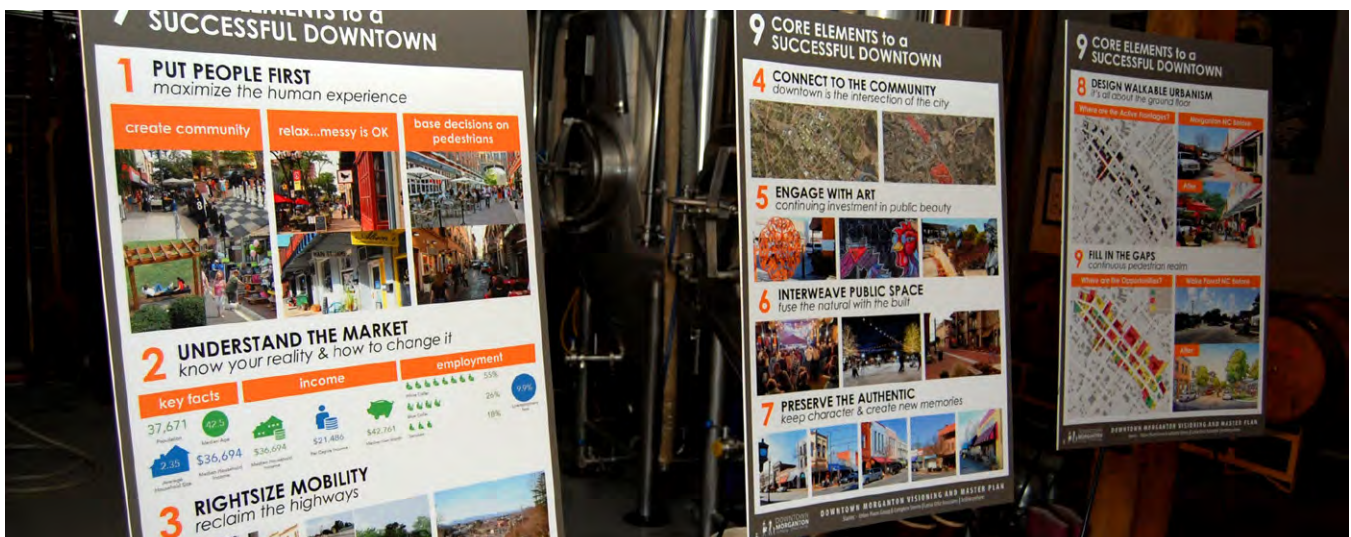
## 4.4 Taphouse Takeover at Brown Mountain Bottleworks

The first of two taphouse takeover events was at Brown Mountain Bottleworks on March 28, 2017, after the second day of stakeholder meetings. The design team presented best practices for creating successful downtowns and how Morganton compares to others. The brief presentation was followed by an open-mic discussion about what they had heard that night, as well as their feelings about the plan moving forward.

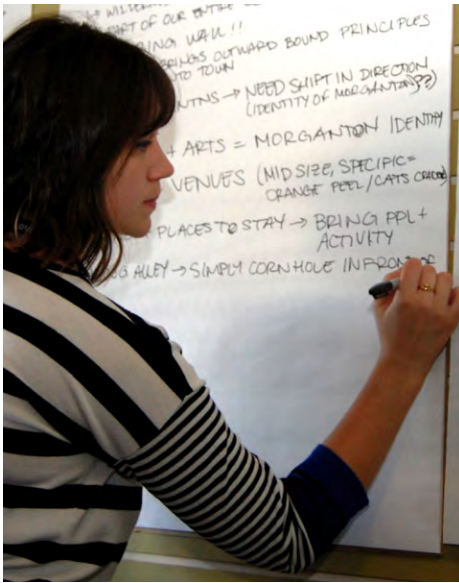
### The key takeaways from the March 28<sup>th</sup> Tap Event were:

- » Make sure the planning process accesses the strong downtown community
- » Connect to the diverse community, including the growing Latino population
- » Need affordable housing for seniors and young people, especially rental options including for people with pets
- » More public spaces that are flexible, build an identity for downtown, able to hold large crowds for events
- » Improve existing ground floor uses to be active; need to see people having fun and doing things
- » Need promotion for local artists in local establishments; a more collaborative representation of artists downtown
- » Create a cultural block with the library, COMMA, and Arts Council, as well as, introduce an interactive children's museum
- » Demo existing Arts Council building and create an amphitheater
- » Want to live and work in downtown
- » Need proper transportation planning including: study conversion of one-way to two-way, educate public on parallel or reverse angle, and encourage mentality of park once and walk to destination
- » Enhance alleys as public space options, starting with disallowing parked cars
- » Experiment with activating the green of the Historic Courthouse with inexpensive, tactical interventions
- » Extend planning efforts to include opportunities past the core of Sterling and Union Streets
- » Fill in the gaps in the greenway and connect to a series of greenspaces
- » Need hotels but reconsider the location of a proposed hotel, the green is currently used as informal public space
- » Create low-impact, incubator spaces for entrepreneurs
- » Tie the identity of downtown to the mountains, nature, and the historic NC Outward Bound School on Table Rock (climbing walls downtown, afterschool programs, expression of Outward Bound's history, activities for T.A.S..K. kids)
- » Need music venues, begin with one medium-sized
- » Create spaces and places for middle aged teens to hang out
- » Express the identity of downtown as nature and art

Presentation boards outlining the nine core elements to a successful downtown







**Top, left to right /** The design team records comments from citizens / Local citizen voicing her opinion

**Middle, left and right /** Citizens speak up about their concerns and opportunities they think should be addressed in the plan

**Bottom /** The design team presents to the public about best practices for creating successful downtowns and what they can do to help create the vision of Downtown Morganton's future



## 4.4 Biking & Walking Tours and Bike Audit

On Saturday, May 6, 2017, the design team and city staff took to the streets with the citizens of Morganton on a biking and walking tour of downtown. The tour encompassed the Central Business District, separated into six different areas: The Square, N. Green to N. Sterling Streets, City Hall, S. Green to S. Sterling Streets, Museum/Library/COMMA, and N. King & Queen Streets. A location was designated in each area to take a break and discuss the observations and concerns about the walking or biking conditions of the area studied. The stops included: the Historic Courthouse, Green field on Green Street (across from Fonta Flora), City Hall plaza, the new Courthouse corner plaza, the Library, and Martha's Park. The walking tour stuck to sidewalks and crosswalks for safety, while the biking tour was a little more adventurous, exploring some of the downtown neighborhoods and utilizing the existing network of bike lanes and shared streets. The bikability of downtown proved difficult before the tour even began. The one-way pairs limit access to many areas of downtown by bike, including the Farmer's Market in area four and the cultural resources in area five.

### Place Game Evaluation and Results

Along with the discussions at stop points, the participants were asked to fill out a Place Game Evaluation for each section. It is a simple tool introduced by the Project for Public Spaces to grade and prioritize improvements for areas like Downtown Morganton. The game tries to answer the question, "what makes a place great" by grading key attributes of great places on a scale of one (poor) to four (good). The key attributes are comfort and image, access and linkages, uses and activities, and sociability. At the end of the game, participants were encouraged to identify opportunities for improvements within the above categories. The grades and observations helped begin the dialogue for what Morganton needs to create a more walkable and bikable downtown.

### The overall results are as follows:

- » Area 1 - The Square: 3.5
- » Area 2 - N. Green to N. Sterling Streets: 2.0

- » Area 3 - City Hall: 2.8
- » Area 4 - S. Green to S. Sterling Streets: 2.3
- » Area 5 - Museum/Library/COMMA: 3.0
- » Area 6 - N. King & Queen Streets: 3.1

### The results per key attribute are as follows:

- » Comfort and Image: 3.0
- » Access and Linkages: 2.8
- » Uses and Activities: 2.8
- » Sociability: 2.6

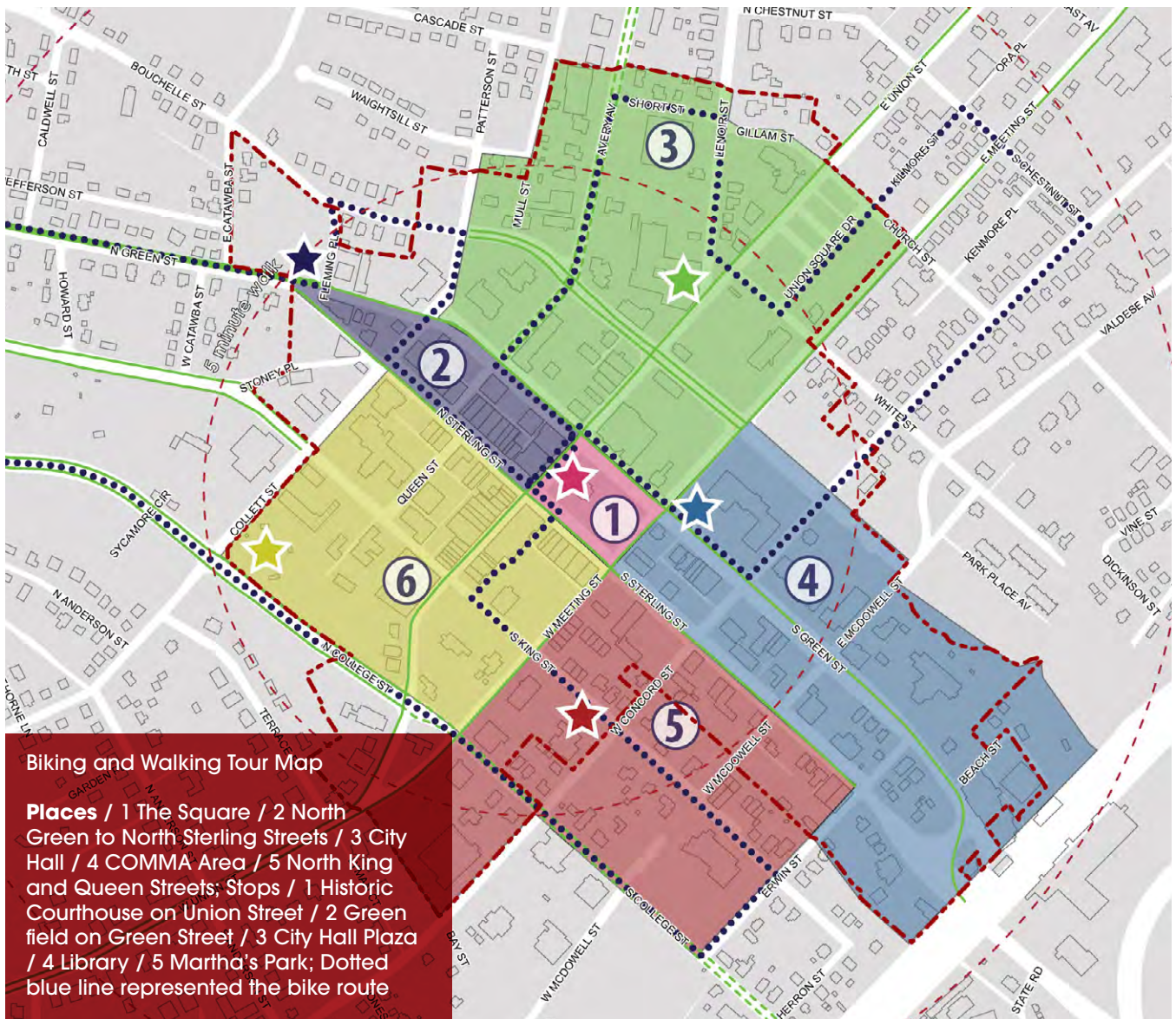
### Biking Audit Checklist and Results

A citizen led group conducted a Biking Audit in Downtown Morganton on May 17, 2017. The design team provided the participants with a checklist, administered by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, to rate downtown's bikability. The participants looked at safety, surface conditions, intersections, and interactions with vehicles/drivers. The rating scale ranged from one (awful) to six (excellent). All questions also had a checklist to answer in more detail and space provided for comments.

The overall score was 16 out of 30, meaning that conditions for riding are okay, but not ideal. There are plenty of opportunity for improvement.

### The key takeaways from the comments were:

- » Shared roads feel dangerous with heavy and fast moving traffic where motorists don't give cyclists enough space.
- » Separated paths end abruptly and don't always go where travelers want to go, including a safe path to the greenway which is a great example for an off-road path.
- » The surfaces were in an okay condition but the drain grates, utility covers, or metal plates were dangerous and slippery.
- » There is some confusion about where and how to ride through intersections and some are worse than others (Sanford Drive and Alexander Avenue near Catawba Meadows Park).
- » Drivers are not as courteous to cyclists as they should be: honking, passing too close, driving too fast, etc.
- » Wayfinding, road markings, and bike amenities (ability to take bikes on bus, secure bike lockers, etc.) need to improve.



**Biking and Walking Tour Map**

**Places** / 1 The Square / 2 North Green to North Sterling Streets / 3 City Hall / 4 COMMA Area / 5 North King and Queen Streets; **Stops** / 1 Historic Courthouse on Union Street / 2 Green field on Green Street / 3 City Hall Plaza / 4 Library / 5 Martha's Park; Dotted blue line represented the bike route



**Above**, left to right / The walking and biking tour groups congregating before the tours began on May 6th / The biking audit crew discussing the checklist after their tour on May 17th

## 4.5 The Charrette

The public design charrette took place May 15<sup>th</sup> through May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The design team set up a working studio in the currently vacant ground floor of the KATZ building on Union Street. The premise of a charrette is to create a collaborative environment in which all experts, decision makers, and local citizens can interact and develop a vision for the future. At the end of the week, participants watch their vision come to life through graphic exhibits and policy recommendations.

The charrette was well attended with stakeholder interviews set up throughout the first three days. While some members of the team met with various interest groups, the remainder explored the study area in depth and sketched ideas for improvements. Each afternoon included a project update and

design pin-up session in which all ideas were taped to display boards for explanation and to generate feedback from participants. The constant feedback loop that is created throughout the week brings the benefit of public buy-in and political will to make the recommendations a reality.

### Parklet

On the first day of the charrette, the design team began their experimentation tactics in downtown. Together with public works, they built a parklet with wooden pallets and giant chalkboards. It was created in an on-street parking spot on Union Street, in front of the KATZ building. The parklet encouraged citizens to stop by the open studio to discuss the downtown vision plan or to simply sit down and enjoy the warm weather. While the parklet only lasted the week, the ultimate goal was to introduce new ways to integrate public

space into the existing urban fabric in innovative and creative ways. The public response to the parklet was extremely positive.

### Kick-Off Meeting

The Kick-Off Meeting was held in the second floor of the Historic Courthouse Auditorium on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The design team presented the synopsis of the first Tap Event at Brown Mountain Bottleworks, the Biking/Walking Tour, and reiterated the importance of the core elements of successful downtowns. The most important aspects of the Kick-Off Meeting were to introduce the preliminary transportation and market analysis, as well as gain feedback from the public through live polling.

**“Parklets are public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces. Most parklets have a distinctive design that incorporates seating, greenery, and/or bike racks and accommodate unmet demand for public space on thriving neighborhood retail streets or commercial areas.”**

—National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)



Public input on the parklet wall



**Top, left to right /** The final stakeholder meeting on Friday, May 19<sup>th</sup> / Design team comprised of city planners, urban designers, landscape architects, and transportation engineers working hard during the charrette week



**Middle, left to right /** A temporary parklet built by the design team along Union Street / A designer making final edits to one of the many iterations for Courthouse Square

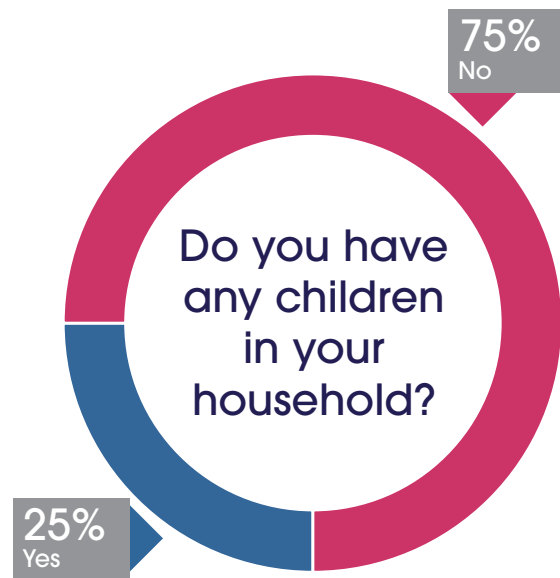
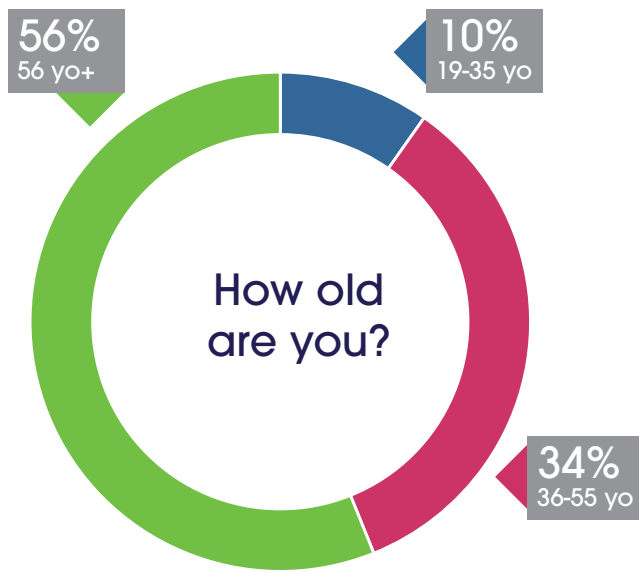
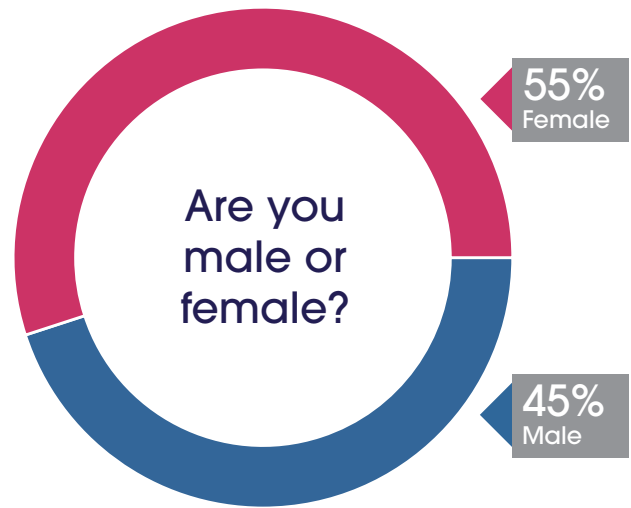


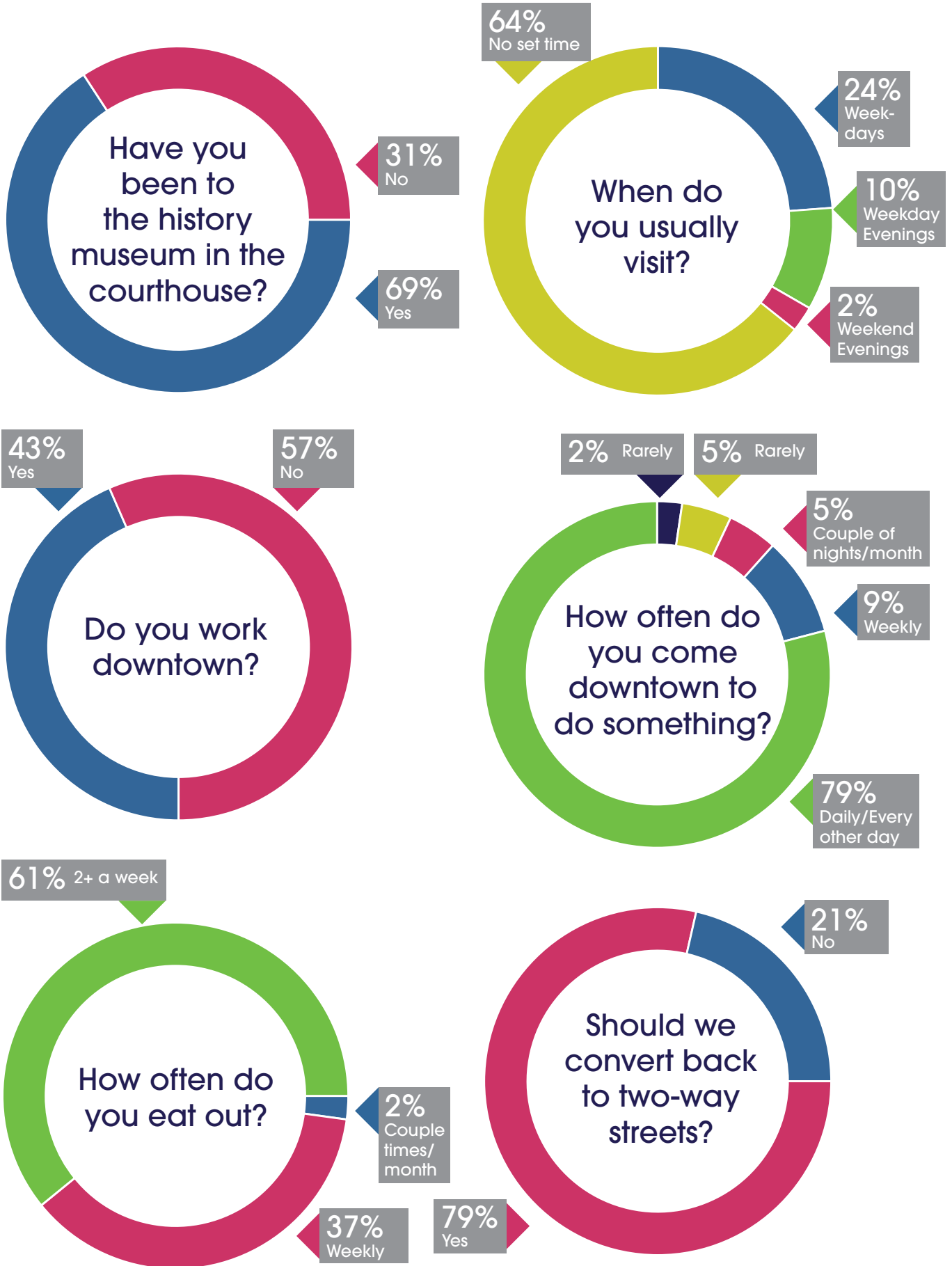
**Bottom /** The crowd of citizens in attendance of the kick-off meeting on Monday, May 15<sup>th</sup>



### Kickoff Meeting | Live Polling Results

Live polling methods were used during a few meetings, including the Kick-Off Meeting, to learn about the demographics of the attendees and gauge their attitudes towards facts and concepts presented. The anonymous results were collected with individual smartphones and displayed across the screen in real-time with charts and graphs. Those results are found on the following pages:





## Courthouse Square should be...

Order from highest to lowest:

- » Programming for Small Scale Events
- » Active Programming for Large Events
- » Passive Activity
- » Spontaneous Activity
- » Historically Accurate

Active Programming for Large Events

Programming for Small Scale Events

Spontaneous Activity

Passive Activity

Historically Accurate

## What would encourage you to come downtown more often?

Order from highest to lowest:

- » Casual Restaurants
- » Higher Quality Retail
- » Clothing/Accessory Stores
- » Events
- » White Tablecloth Restaurants
- » Make Things
- » Art Galleries
- » Public Spaces & Breweries (tie)
- » Convenient Parking

More Convenient Parking

More Retail at a Higher Quality

Places to Make Things

Art Galleries

Clothing and Accessory Stores

Breweries

Casual Restaurants

White Tablecloth Restaurants

Events

Public Spaces



Kickoff meeting participants utilize their smartphones in the Live Polling questions



## Taphouse Takeover at Catawba Brewing

The second of two taphouse takeover events was at Catawba Brewing on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The design team presented their work from the week and allowed citizens to view the boards to ask any questions and place comments directly on the imagery. The turnout and feedback from the community was positive and directly integrated into later design decisions.

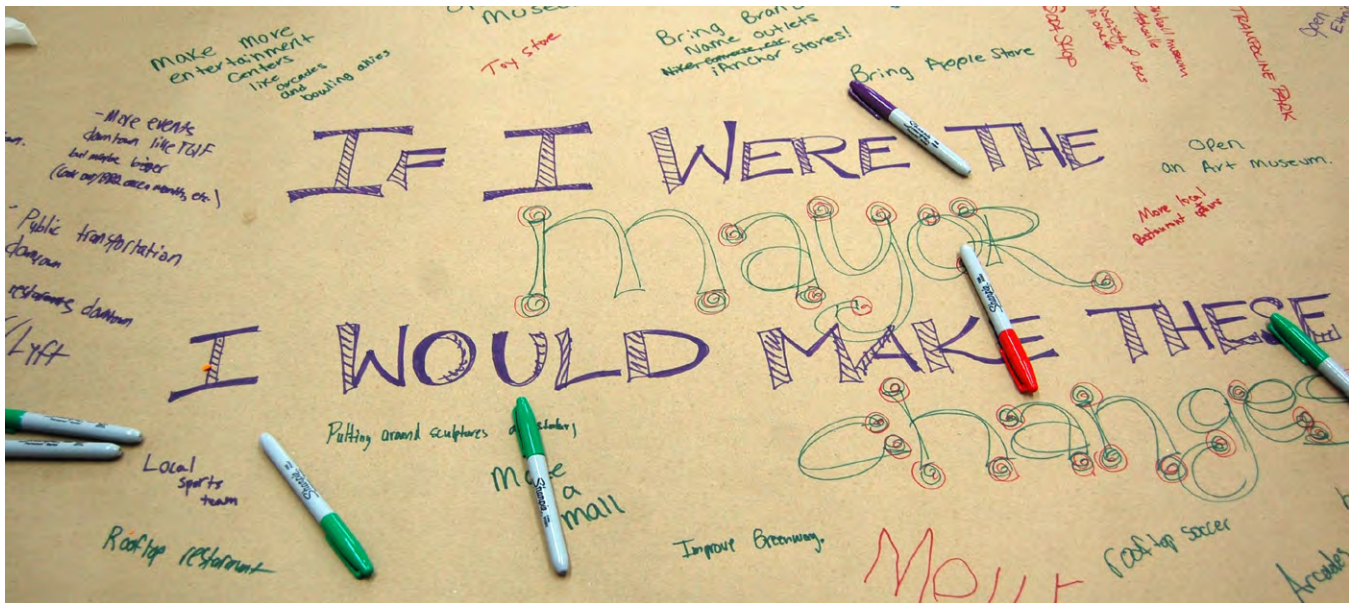
## The key takeaways from the May 18<sup>th</sup> Tap Event were:

- » Possibly introduce a theme or identity for public art to follow
- » The variety of housing options are encouraging, but there is still concern about affordability.
- » There was a great appreciation for the amount of consideration for the cycling community.
- » The one-way pair conversions are a good idea, but there were still some reservations about the details of how it would operate.



**Top**, left to right / Design team discussing the progress of the charrette / The presentation at Catawba Brewing  
**Bottom**, left to right / A few citizens enjoying some hard earned craft beers after conducting the Biking Audit / Morgantown citizens hanging out after the presentation





### Youth Event

The Youth Event took place in the old KATZ building at the end of the open design studio session on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017. There was a range of young people in attendance and some insightful feedback concerning the lack of entertainment in downtown for teens. While there are a few options for children (e.g., Martha’s Park, the history museum) and many more for young adults (e.g., local art, breweries), young people from 13-20 years old currently have little reason to come downtown.

### The key takeaways from the Youth Event were:

- » We need a place to hang out, where we can do homework and socialize (e.g., a “third place”, like Starbucks). While Starbucks was specifically mentioned as the kind of place youth are desiring for downtown Morganton, we recommend that downtown stakeholders first try to work with existing businesses, coffee shops and cafes to create the environment that youth are desiring before trying to attract Starbucks to downtown.
- » Bring more ridesharing services to Morganton to improve mobility choices.
- » Bike share stations
- » More (or higher quality) youth sports leagues and facilities.
- » Enhance existing museums and/or attract new ones that cater to ages 13-20.
- » Free WiFi in downtown
- » Public restrooms
- » Kid-centric public art
- » Engage teens more to “define their own city”



Young people of Morganton responding to the prompt, “If I Were the Mayor, I Would Make These Changes...”



### Charrette Week Final Comments

On Thursday May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the public input sessions concluded, and the studio remained open until 7pm for drop-in discussions with the design team and city officials. On Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the final steering committee meeting was held to garner a pulse check of the initial recommendations produced during the week. The design team left with a charge to refine design concepts for the vision of downtown.

### The final comments from the public and stakeholders were as follows:

- » Add more green space, not just hardscaping (example: plaza behind Brown Mountain Bottleworks)
- » Need more rooftop public space or at least accessible to public (currently, most rooftops are private residences instead of semi-private commercial spaces or public spaces)
- » N. Sterling Street should also be two-way
- » Activate City Hall Plaza with movable tables and chairs, temporary art exhibits, and

interesting art or vegetation walls

- » Better strategy for public art, including non-traditional artists outside of the Art’s Council

### Courthouse Square Plan General Comments:

- » String lights between trees
- » Movies on lawn
- » Food trucks
- » Public restrooms
- » Farmer’s market at the square
- » Open, flexible space around stage may be more ideal than fixed terraces



The design team, city staff, and citizens openly discuss the design explorations made during the charrette.

## 4.6 Final Presentation

The final presentation took place in the CoMMA auditorium on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The design team spent two weeks refining the vision for downtown after the stakeholder interviews and public feedback during the charrette in May. City staff and stakeholders wore “Ask Me” t-shirts and assisted the design team in

leading discussions with citizens around seven design boards. It was estimated that 400+ people were in attendance.

### Each board represented a key goal:

- » Restore Two-Way Operations
- » Maximize Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space
- » Focus Activity into the Core

- » Diversify and Expand Housing
- » Connect to the Community
- » Embed Art into Everything
- » Have Fun and Experiment

After a cocktail hour for open discussion, the design team presented the final vision plan and recommendations which are detailed in this document.



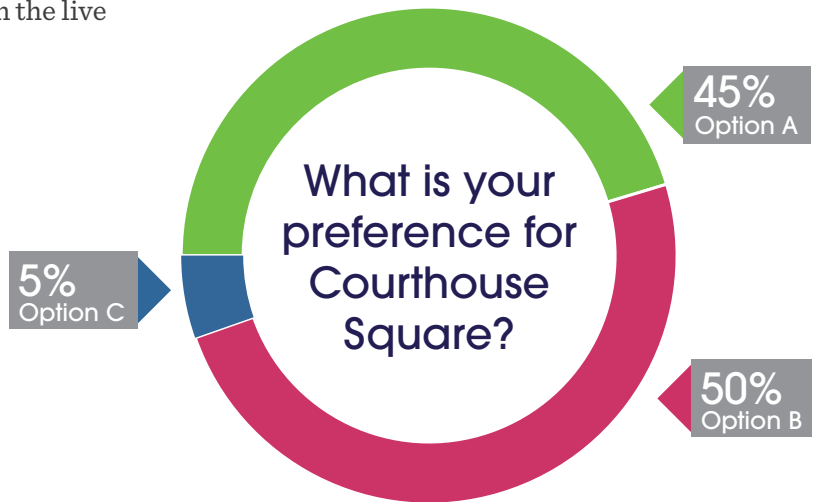
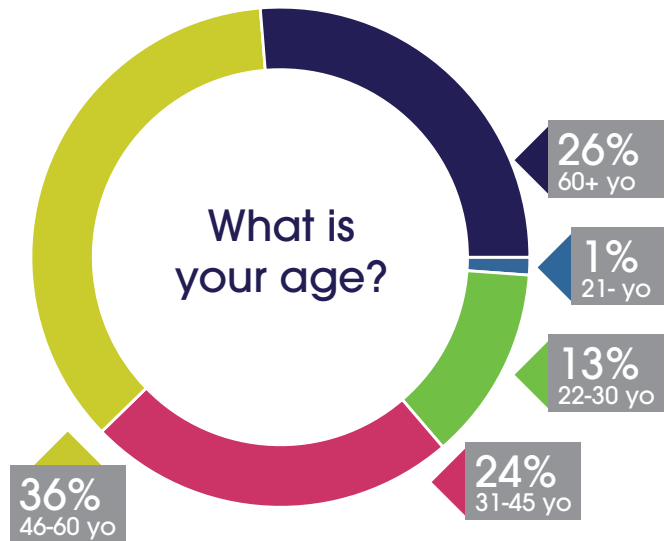
**Left /** Participants discussing the ideas presented on boards before the final presentation  
**Above /** The crowd in the auditorium voting during a live polling exercise of the final presentation  
**Right /** A volunteer wearing one of the city provided “Ask Me” t-shirts  
**Below /** The crowd discussing the design concepts and project goals during a cocktail hour with the design team, stakeholders, and other volunteers



## Final Presentation | Live Polling Results

Live polling questions were asked during the final presentation, similar to the kick-off meeting. This meeting had a more diverse array of participants with most age groups evenly represented, with a few under 21 years old. During the charrette, the design team re-imagined Courthouse Square as a flexible public space with several new design features. After multiple iterations, the designers presented two options for the public to vote on; the result was evenly split between the two options, with some asking for yet another option.

After presenting the analysis and design concepts, the recommendations for the final vision moving forward were broken down into the top ten initiatives to complete in the next five years. The public voted to prioritize these initiatives in the live poll.



### What goals do you most want to see accomplished in the next 5 years?

Order from highest to lowest:

- » Courthouse Square improvements
- » Increase active uses on ground floor in core
- » Complete two-way conversion
- » Attract a hotel to downtown
- » Create courtyard behind Brown Mountain Bottleworks
- » Adopt a ground floor active use overlay for the core
- » Move Arts Council to pioneer a new block
- » Construct 100 new housing units downtown
- » Bury overhead utilities
- » Connect to State Property Campus with a greenway street on College Street

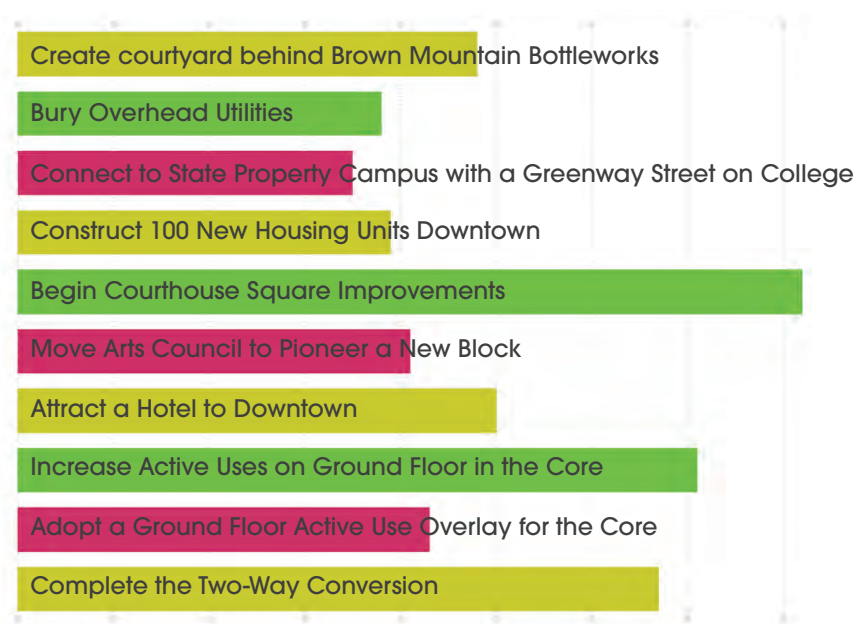


Photo taken from the CoMMA mezzanine of the crowd during cocktail hour before the final presentation





## Final Presentation Comments & Questions

In addition to live voting during the final presentation, there were opportunities to comment on the design concepts before and after. The design team and stakeholders held an open forum before the presentation for interested parties to ask questions and discuss the material presented on boards in the foyer of CoMMA. After the presentation, a social forum was opened for questions/comments online.

### The key takeaways from the public comments during the open discussion were as follows:

- » Utilize some of the proposed on-street parking along Courthouse Square for green space and seating
- » Take down the confederate soldier monument
- » Positive comments for the imagery showing 'Grove Arcade' style kiosks along Sterling Street by Wells Fargo and the inclusion of outdoor rooftop terraces in the old Kimbrell's building housing option
- » Concern for affordable housing in the newly proposed options
- » Explore public transit options to connect people from other busy hubs outside of downtown (the mall, lake, etc.)
- » Need to attract living wage paying jobs to downtown

### The main concerns expressed in the online Social Q&A were as follows:

- » Measuring economic and racial inequality and ensuring input from diverse cultural groups
- » New housing should include affordable and senior units
- » The cost and who pays for the two-way street conversion
- » Create a more vibrant outdoor community life
- » Think small for tactical revitalization (food trucks, art vendors, etc.)
- » Consider attracting jobs to downtown
- » Include a range of activities for various age groups: youths, millennials, young families, and seniors



DL19611

CUSTO  
FASHION

UGS

SALE





5

**HUDSON**

# **Market Conditions & Retail Strategies**

**Existing Conditions**

**Market Data & Demographics**

**Downtown Retail Strategy:  
Strengthening Retail through  
Activation**

**Housing Strategy**

**UGG**

**UGG**

**UGG**

**UGG**

### 5.1 Existing Conditions

#### District Classification

With approximately 257,000 square feet of ground floor space in downtown, Morganton is classified in the retail industry as a “Community Center/ Large Neighborhood Center” (International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC)). This classification is reserved for shopping areas that typically offer between 125 – 400k sf of retail goods. The scale of offering typically draws customers from 3-6 miles away— about a ten minute drive, and often includes general merchandise or convenience-oriented retail. Based on local feedback, downtown customers do live within a 5-15 minute drive of the area; however, the retail offerings are dispersed throughout downtown and many potential retail spaces house passive businesses that are either service-oriented in nature or rarely open. This undermines the downtown’s ability to fully capture customer spending from within the trade area.

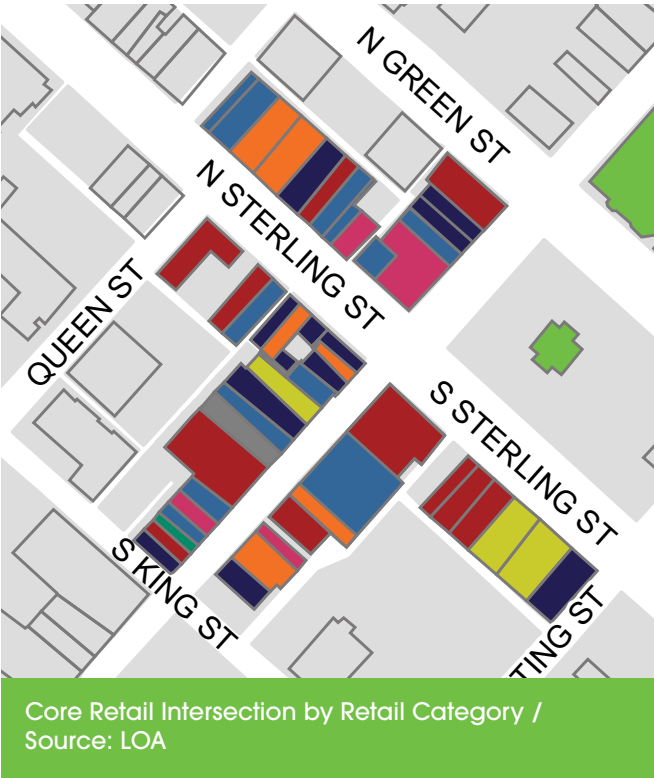
#### Downtown Anchors

Local customers come to downtown to enjoy films at the Marquee Cinema, dine at local restaurants, or to meet their convenience needs at personal care salons, pharmacies, and grocery stores. Visitors from father away, mostly from Asheville and Charlotte, are also drawn to Morganton for its range of outdoor activities and historic/ archaeological sites by the Catawba River, and to enjoy Morganton’s unique set of brewery offerings, farm-to-table restaurants, and outdoor summer programming. The outdoor and natural attractions that Morganton has to offer include Catawba Meadows Village, the National Historic Trail, the Catawba River Greenway, and the BeanStalk ZipLine. However, many of these anchors are located a mile outside of downtown.

Retail in downtown Morganton is predominantly clustered on Union Street (between King Street and Green Street) and Sterling Street (between Union Street and Avery Avenue). This “Core Retail Intersection” features over 2,200 linear feet of

concentrated ground floor storefronts. Major anchors like Catawba Brewery, Fonta Flora Brewery, and CoMMA (City of Morganton Municipal Auditorium) are located just outside this retail core intersection.

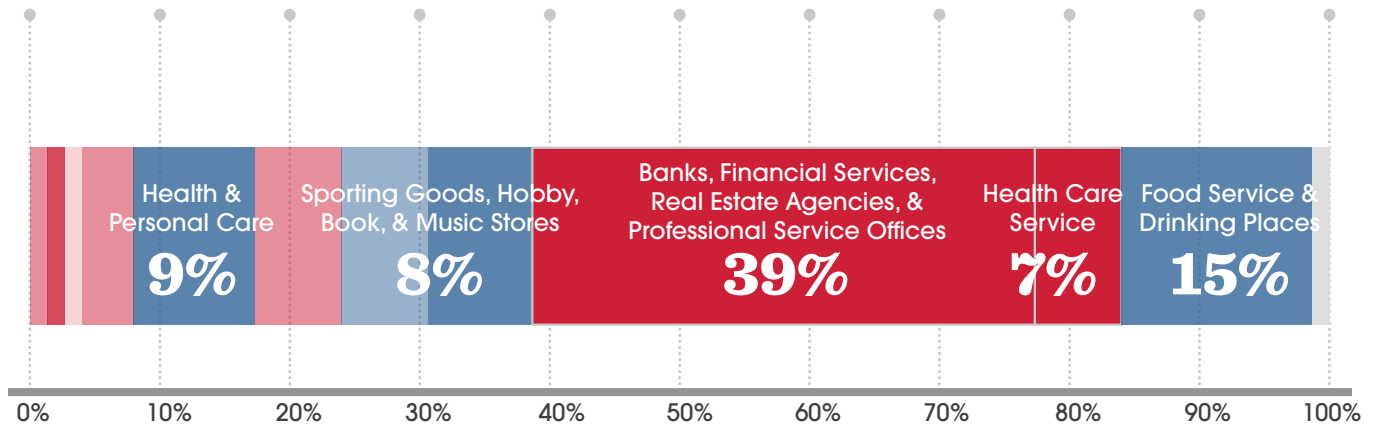
The growth of breweries in downtown Morganton is not dissimilar from any other small- to mid- sized city in the country. This phenomenon has been connected to millennials moving back to mid-tier cities seeking affordable real estate and higher quality of life. Breweries often act as anchors for commercial districts and more importantly serve as economic drivers, attracting other businesses that wish to leverage the foot traffic brought in by breweries. Since the opening of Catawba Brewery and Fonta Flora Brewery, other artisanal dining and beverage retailers have also followed suit downtown, including Brown Mountain Bottleworks and Homer’s Soda Shop.



LEGEND	
<span style="color: #000080;">■</span> Food/Drink	<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> Food/Beverage (specialty food)
<span style="color: #008000;">■</span> Institutions	<span style="color: #800000;">■</span> Finance/Insurance/Office
<span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> Health Care	<span style="color: #666666;">■</span> Vacant
<span style="color: #E91E63;">■</span> Clothing/Accessories	
<span style="color: #9ACD32;">■</span> Home Goods	
<span style="color: #000080;">■</span> Misc./Sporting/Hobby	

## Non-Retail Use

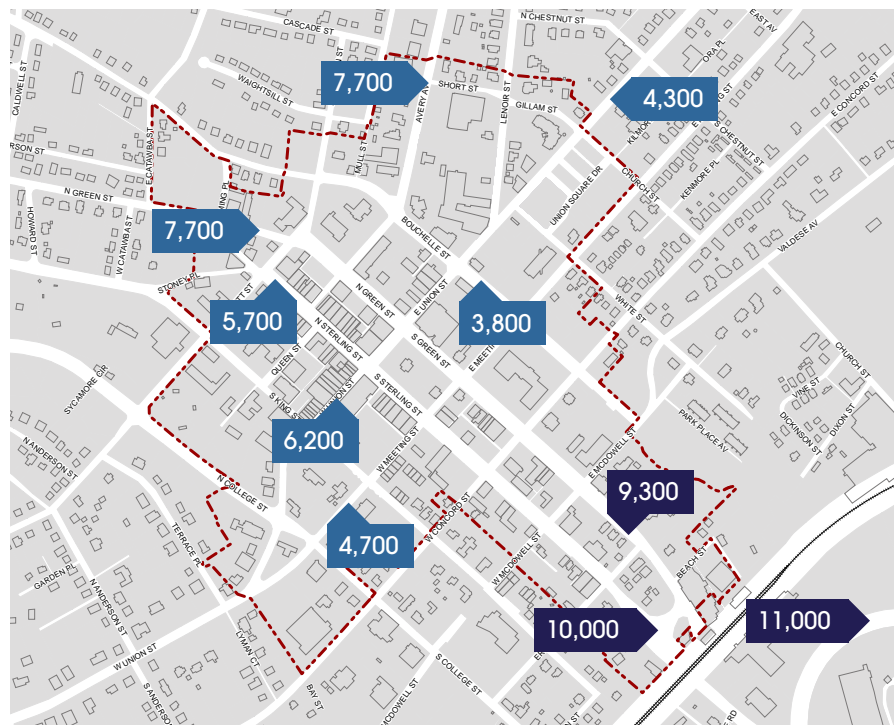
Analytics show that 46% of ground floor storefronts at the Core Retail Intersection are filled with passive uses that are not open past 6pm. While non-retail uses are important in a downtown environment, the fact that these uses create significant gaps between existing businesses makes it challenging for the downtown to function as a shopping destination. Businesses are less likely to share customers, and customers are less likely to patronize multiple businesses if the distance between them is too great. Typically, successful retail environments strive for no more than 50 linear feet of non-retail use at any given location.



Number of Businesses (by NAICS Categories) in the Core Retail Intersection of Downtown Morganton: There are 75 total businesses and 46% of ground floor storefronts have passive uses that are not open past 6pm.

## One-Way Pair Impact on Retail

The one-way pair configuration downtown reduces vehicular counts for retailers as well as accessibility and convenience for customers who may be forced to double back in order to shop at their desired destination. The most recent traffic counts recorded 7,700 - 9,300 vehicles on average on Green Street and 6,200 on Sterling Street. When compared with typical retailer traffic requirements, stores such as Family Dollar or Dunkin Donuts would require higher average daily traffic counts (between 11,000-20,000 average vehicles daily).



See also Section 7.1: Restore Two-way Operation (p. 95)

Local Average Daily Traffic Counts

## Downtown Vacancy

A survey of available properties listed on the Downtown Morganton website in April 2017 showed that only 32% of total available space on the ground floor is leased for retail use in downtown. All other ground floor spaces are listed as office use, perpetuating the problem of passive ground floor uses.

## Operating Capacity

An analysis of operating hours of major businesses around the Core Retail Intersection revealed that few are open past 6pm on weekdays. This results in an overall closed atmosphere downtown and is especially problematic for weekend trippers who are often keen to venture downtown on Mondays. According to the manager of Kitchen Connection, located on Union Street, the store had received more foot traffic on

Mondays and has since adjusted their operating hours to 11am-6pm on Mondays.

## 5.1 RECOMMENDATION

*Work with local retailers to create a district in the core of downtown with consistent and complimentary hours of operation.*

## Competitors

There is over 900,000 square feet of competitive shopping center space within 10-15 minute drive of downtown Morganton. Residents in the area are likely meeting most of their general merchandise, grocery and personal care needs at pharmacies and supermarkets located in nearby shopping malls. Economies of scale and the sheer diversity of offerings at these big box stores make it unlikely that

downtown can compete directly against these businesses.

## Comparative Districts

Based on focus group discussions with residents, real estate representatives, and business owners, a few comparative districts were identified as being similar in terms of retail offerings, attractions, and residential customer base: Black Mountain, NC and Blowing Rock, NC. Unlike Morganton, both districts have at least one lodging/accommodation option available within 1/4 mile of their retail cores. This encourages longer visits and is currently missing in Downtown Morganton.



## COMPETITIVE SHOPPING DISTRICTS

### Legend

1. Morganton Heights Shopping Center  
461,373 SF
2. Magnolia Plaza  
200,000 SF
3. Fiddler's Run Shopping Center  
200,000 - 300,000 SF
4. Boat House & Service Center; Eighteen Produce & Gardens and Harbor Inn Seafood

Source: ESRI Business Analyst, LOA



Left / Tasting samples at The Natural Olive on W. Union Street  
 Below / Coffee at My Local Bakery



**COMPARING CURRENT OPERATING HOURS**

	The Natural Olive	Food Matters	My Local Bakery
Monday	10 AM - 2 PM	9 AM - 8 PM	8 AM - 6 PM
Tuesday-Thursday	10 AM - 5 PM	9 AM - 8 PM	7 AM - 6 PM
Friday	10 AM - 6 PM	9 AM - 8 PM	7 AM - 6 PM
Saturday	10 AM - 6 PM	9 AM - 8 PM	8 AM - 4 PM
Sunday	Closed	11 AM - 7 PM	Closed

Bottom / Food display shelves inside Food Matters Market and Cafe



## 5.2 Market Data & Demographics

### Defining the Trade Area

The “trade area” for Downtown Morganton as a retail location depends largely on a few key factors: the total retail square footage, existing tenant mix and anchors, visibility, access, and nearby competition. Downtown Morganton is a highly accessible commercial district by car. It is on a major arterial road (US-64) and ten minutes away from I-40. This makes the downtown easy to get to for regional residents and also easy to find for out-of-town visitors. As a result, trade areas were determined by drive times – 5-minute drive, 10-minute drive, and 15-minute drive.

However, it must be noted, the one-way couplet prohibits visitors driving through on US-64 to enter the core retail intersection as it would require drivers to make

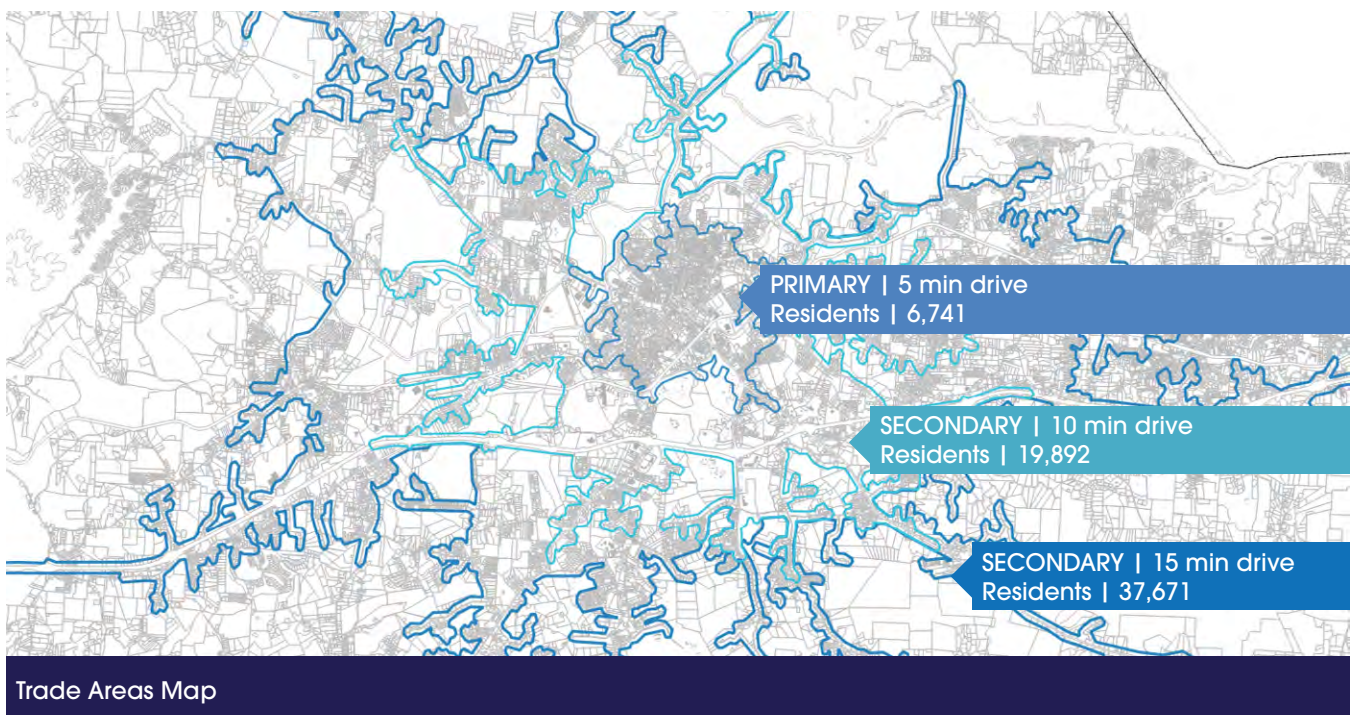
a full turn at Avery Avenue. In addition, downtown currently lacks high-quality directional signage that can capture the attention of potential driving customers and point them to the Core Retail Intersection. Therefore, converting the one-way couplet into two-way traffic will be beneficial to retailers on either side of Green Street and Sterling Street.

### Main Demographic Findings

Within a 5-minute drive of Downtown Morganton, the population is aging with a significant portion of the total population aged over 55 (31.2%). This group is projected to grow to 32.8% of the total population in 2021. Therefore, downtown amenities and retailers need to consider the needs of a consistently growing group of older residents in a low density area (1,605 residents per square mile).

The primary customers living within a 5-minute drive of Downtown Morganton have a lower median household income than Burke County. There also remains a consistent proportion of low income population (33%) with household incomes less than \$25,000. Retailers need to ensure that there are lower price point options for these groups in order to also capture their demand.

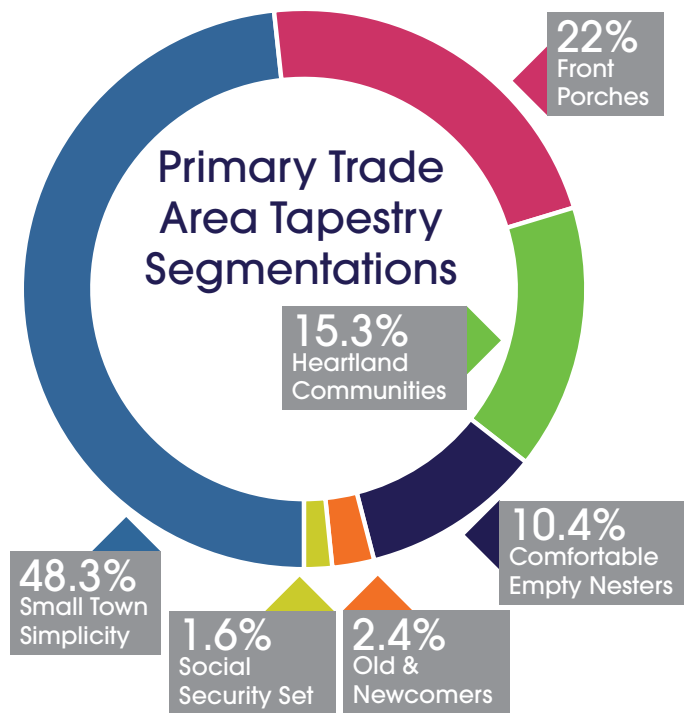
Finally, the overall population of Morganton is diversifying with the Hispanic population growing at the fastest rate. According to stakeholders at focus group discussions, real numbers of Hispanic population may in fact be higher than that reported in census data. The proportion of Hispanic population in Morganton is already much greater than Burke County with a difference of 18.7%. However, despite the growing Hispanic population in Morganton, the downtown environment and



retail offerings do not currently reflect the needs and preferences of this ethnic group.

### Psychographics

A psychographic analysis was conducted with ESRI Tapestry Segmentation to identify customer groups in the various trade areas (5-min drive, 10-min drive, 15-min drive), and describe the socioeconomic characteristics of these residents. ESRI Tapestry segmentation provides an accurate, detailed geodemographic segmentation system that integrates consumer’s spending habits, concerns and values with residential characteristics to explain why they buy and identify markets and classify U.S. neighborhoods. The following descriptions on page 69 of customer groups are therefore based on descriptions provided by ESRI.



POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS			
	2010	2016	2021
Total Population	6,730	6,741	6,753
Population Density	1,599/sq mi	1,605/sq mi	1,608/sq mi
Median Age	38.1	39.2	40.3
Median Age (Burke County)	--	42.7	--
Population Aged 55 and Over	28.4%	31.2%	32.8%
Population Aged 55 and Over (Burke County)	--	32.8%	--

HOUSEHOLD DEMOGRAPHICS			
	2010	2016	2021
Median Household Income	--	\$31,961	\$31,118
Median Household Income (Burke County)	--	\$37,173	--
Household Income <\$25,000	--	41.9%	41.5%
Household Income <\$25,000 (Burke County)	--	33%	--
White Population	66%	63%	60.3%
White Population (Burke County)	--	83%	--
Black Population	13%	12.6%	12.2%
Black Population (Burke County)	--	6.66%	--
Asian Population	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%
Asian Population (Burke County)	--	3.75%	--
Hispanic Population	20.7%	24.8%	28.5%
Hispanic Population (Burke County)	--	6.31%	--

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online

Within a 5-minute drive of Downtown Morganton, customer groups are comprised of young families and empty nesters, or baby boomers. These groups are price-conscious consumers with median household incomes ranging from \$27,000-\$39,000 and are identified as ‘Small Town Simplicity’, ‘Front Porches’, ‘Heartland Communities’ and ‘Comfortable Empty Nesters’. Overall, these customers support the local community and businesses, enjoy fun outdoor activities and appreciate rural and natural environments. The ‘Small Town Simplicity’ customer group shrinks significantly farther out from Downtown Morganton while the ‘Heartland Communities’ group increases in size. The ‘Heartland Communities’ prefer a slower pace of life and are budget savvy, traditional shoppers.

Given that many visitors to Morganton are from Asheville and Charlotte, a psychographic analysis was also conducted for both cities. In Asheville, 28%

of the downtown residents are customers called ‘Emerald City’. This customer group has a median household income of \$52,000 and is well-educated. These consumers research products and buy natural, green and environmentally-friendly products. They are also interested in the fine arts and embrace the ‘foodie’ culture, which may prove advantageous to Downtown Morganton that already has a strong farm-to-table dining and brewery scene and also offers art walks and summer outdoor concerts.

In the city of Charlotte, 85% of the downtown residents are categorized as ‘Metro Renters’. This customer group also has a household income of \$52,000, much higher than Morganton residents and is also well-educated and interested in fine arts. Another customer group that is represented in both Asheville and Charlotte, ‘Young and Restless’ is comprised mostly of Gen Y-ers with lower median household incomes of \$36,000. These are well-

**Small Town Simplicity**  
Median Age: 40 years old

- » Growing up and staying close to home; single householders
- » Close knit urban communities of young singles (many with children)
- » Owners of old, single-family houses, or renters in small multi-unit buildings
- » Price conscious: Visit discount stores and clip coupons, sometimes play the lottery

**Front Porches**  
Median Age: 34.2 years old

- » Diverse Group: Millennials in the middle: single/married, renters/homeowners, middle/working class
- » Urban market mix of single-family, townhome, and multi-unit dwellings
- » Online all the time: entertainment, social media, shopping, and news
- » Seek adventures: leisure includes night life, traveling, hiking, and other outdoor activities

Four Major Tapestry Segmentation Groups General Information (Source: ESRI)

**Comfortable Empty Nesters**  
Median Age: 46.8 years old

- » Own older single-family homes in urban areas, with 1 or 2 vehicles
- » Live and work in the same county, creating shorter commute times
- » Invest wisely, well-insured, comfortable banking online or in person
- » Enjoy reading, playing board games and cards, going to museums and rock concerts, dining out, and walking for exercise

**Heartland Communities**  
Median Age: 41.5 years old

- » Homeowners with pets, residing in single-family dwellings in rural areas
- » Prefer to eat at home, shop at discount stores, bank in person, and understand importance of buying local
- » Own every tool and piece of equipment imaginable to maintain their homes, vehicles, vegetable gardens, and lawns
- » Enjoy outdoor activities, such as fishing, hunting, camping, boating, and even bird watching



educated young workers who may still be enrolled in college. The diverse consumers are also careful shoppers who are aware of prices but willing to try new products and experiences.

### Strategic Positioning

An analysis of the “successful retail zone” is reflected in the Strategic Positioning Matrix at the right. The matrix allows for plotting of psychographic profiles of the resident and visitor customers based on income levels (vertical axis) and lifestyle choices (horizontal axis). “Low” income on the axis refers to Median Household Income (MHI) below \$45,000, “Middle” income refers to MHI between \$45,000 and \$90,000, and “High” income refers to MHI above \$90,000. The income levels translate to corresponding price points for a successful retail zone. The horizontal axis, on the other hand, is driven by three main lifestyle categories: Traditional, Contemporary, and Hip/Trendy. The area of convergence of the various tapestry segments reflect who the successful retail zone can and should be attracting.

Based on the psychographic analysis, in order to meet the demand of resident customers – who are distinct from visitors - within 5-, 10- and 15-minute drive of Downtown Morganton, retailers should offer a mix of products and services for families and empty nesters at accessible price points with some opportunity for contemporary offerings.

The top four categories of resident customers within a five minute drive include (links take you to detailed psychographic profiles which we highly encourage retailers to review). A few highlights follow that might help brainstorm what products and services might be appropriate.

**Small Town Simplicity:** Residents embark on pursuits including online computer games, scrapbooking, and rural activities like hunting and fishing.

[http://downloads.esri.com/esri\\_content\\_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment58.pdf](http://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment58.pdf)

**Front Porches:** Price is more important than brand names or style to these consumers. With limited incomes, these are not adventurous shoppers. They would rather cook a meal at home than dine out. They seek adventure and strive to have fun.

[http://downloads.esri.com/esri\\_content\\_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment37.pdf](http://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment37.pdf)

**Heartland Communities:** These are budget savvy consumers; they stick to brands they grew up with and know the price of goods they purchase. Buying American is important.

[http://downloads.esri.com/esri\\_content\\_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment26.pdf](http://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment26.pdf)

**Comfortable Empty Nesters:** Prefer eating at home instead of dining out. Home maintenance a priority among these homeowners.

[http://downloads.esri.com/esri\\_content\\_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment16.pdf](http://downloads.esri.com/esri_content_doc/dbl/us/tapestry/segment16.pdf)

There is no shortage of good ideas for how to turn this information into products and services. A few online sources that report on retail trends include:

- » Forbes Retail and #ShopTalk Section
- » Business INsider Retail Section
- » The Wall Street Journal Business
- » Chain Store Age

Store owners should also ask and solicit direct feedback from their customers in order to actively curate offerings. Every retail category may be a little different, but below are a few examples.

- » **Families:** A clothing store might begin to offer children’s clothing, a coffee shop might include a play area for kids, restaurants might highlight fun child-friendly menus (consider how larger chains bring placemats and crayons to the table for kids while parents order) or offer special children discounts.
- » **Older shoppers and empty nesters:** These shoppers have a different set of needs. These customers like convenience. Stores may choose to make deliveries for their older customers. They also like loyalty programs, for instance and may welcome a loyalty card program from their favorite store.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATION

*To meet the demand of resident customers, retailers should offer a mix of products and services for families and empty nesters at accessible price points with some opportunity for contemporary offerings.*

Given the difference between local resident and visitor psychographics, Downtown Morganton retailers also have the opportunity to provide some contemporary and hip and trendy offerings to meet preferences of the ‘Emerald City’, ‘Metro Renters’ and ‘Young and Restless’ groups.

### 5.3 RECOMMENDATION

To meet the demand of visiting customers, retailers should offer **contemporary and hip/trendy** offerings.

**Contemporary** retail offerings include stores that offer a range of basic goods with some variation of style to meet the needs of those who are fashion-conscious. As a point of reference, stores like Macy’s, Banana Republic, and Ikea offer contemporary apparel and home furnishing goods.

**Hip/ trendy** retail offerings include stores that keep up with the latest trends and popular brands. These stores often cater to the customer that is young and keeps up with trends through the internet and social media and are therefore fashion forward. As a point of reference, stores like Urban Outfitters and CB2 offer hip/trendy apparel and home furnishing goods.

#### Leakage

A leakage analysis compares the total discretionary income of residents within a trade area against the total sales estimated for local businesses, also within the same trade area. If local businesses sell more

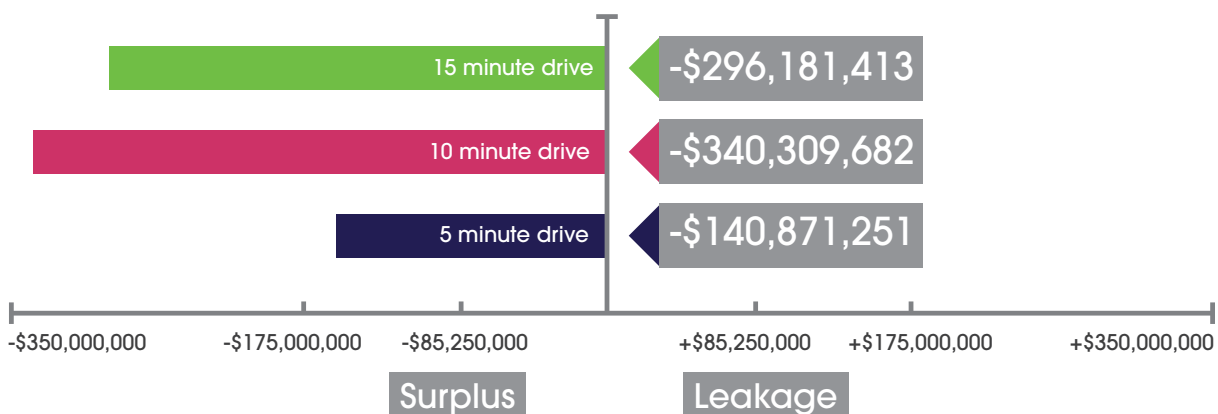
than local residents are purchasing, this means that outsiders may be coming into the area to shop. This is also known as a retail surplus.

However, if residents are spending more than local stores are selling, this suggests that residents are spending outside the trade area, and this is known as a retail leakage. Depending on the size of leakage, this may suggest opportunities for both existing and new businesses to better meet the needs of the residential customer base.

In 2016, there was a retail surplus in the primary and secondary trade areas of Morganton, presenting limited opportunities to expand and attract new retailers. At the largest trade area, a 15-minute drive, leakage was only found in three main retail categories: Electronics and Appliance Stores, Drinking Places, and Beer and Wine & Liquor Stores. After applying a 40% capture rate, Downtown Morganton only has 4,210 square feet of additional supportable retail space. Therefore, Morganton needs to increase its visitor spending and encourage existing retailers to deepen their penetration into local resident spending.

### 5.4 RECOMMENDATION

Increase visitor spending (see Recommendation 5.5) and encourage existing retailers to deepen their penetration into local resident spending (see Recommendation 5.2). Tracking can occur by simply asking people to sign up for a newsletter mailing list or asking for a zip code at the time of sale – both common ways to track customers.



Primary and Secondary Trade Area Surplus / Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online

### 5.3 Downtown Retail Strategy: Strengthening Retail through Activation

#### Downtown Outdoor Attractions & Outdoor Themed Retail

Outdoor activity anchors such as Catawba River Greenway and nearby Catawba Meadows are already national visitor drivers. Growing these adventure-themed attractions downtown at the core retail intersection will reinforce Downtown Morganton as “nature’s playground” and bring experience into retail, attracting greater visitor spending required in Morganton.

At a time when malls and downtowns across the country are facing hundreds of store closings, property owners are looking to fill their spaces with more diverse tenants and uses. Increasingly, experiential retail or entertainment concepts are filling up square footage vacated by department

stores in shopping malls and have the added bonus of being immune to e-commerce. One example of this approach is building rock climbing facilities and ropes courses. This can easily be borrowed in the outdoor spaces within Downtown Morganton; for example on the lawns of the historic Burke County Courthouse. Existing local operators Bean Stalk Zipline can be engaged to bring smaller ropes courses to the downtown core.

#### 5.5 RECOMMENDATION

*In order to bring experience into retail and attract greater visitor spending, bring the adventure themed attractions outside of downtown into the core retail intersection.*



**Left** / Zip line’s can be temporarily added in open spaces downtown to emphasize Morganton’s identity as nature’s playground / **Right** / Temporary rock wall can be added to downtown or a more permanent version (Asheville, NC) / **Bottom** / Urban Rappelling at Omni Hotel (Nashville, TN) *Image Credit: Big Brothers & Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee*



## Ensure Active Ground Floor Uses

The lack of available ground floor retail space is currently a problem faced by potential retailers interested in entering Morganton. The City needs to work closely with building owners within the core retail intersection to create contiguous retail opportunities. This may require offering incentives to building owners that actively recruit retailers for ground floor spaces.

Zoning may also be used to encourage ground floor retail. A Retail Overlay District may be judiciously applied to the Core Retail Intersection to restrict passive and/or non-retail uses from locating on these blocks. Service and non-retail uses can be encouraged to use upper floors or locate immediately outside of the Retail Core Intersection where there is sufficient space.

### 5.6 RECOMMENDATION

*Offer incentives to building owners that actively recruit retailers for ground floor spaces.*

### 5.7 RECOMMENDATION

*Judiciously apply a retail overlay district to the core retail intersection to restrict passive and/or non-retail uses. (more information on page 180)*

**Right / Suggested New Layout for Morganton's 'Call for Business' Web Page / Source: LOA**

The current 'Call for Businesses' web page can be enhanced with additional information for retailers and businesses looking to relocate or start a new business in Downtown Morganton. Market data and demographics from the preceding section should inform the content of the web page so that prospective retailers can be better aware of the market demand and potential customers in the area.

The page should also specify the downtown's strategic position and encourage businesses in key retail categories that support Downtown Morganton as "nature's playground" – especially adventure/ entertainment facility operators, sporting and hobby goods and specialty natural foods.

### 5.8 RECOMMENDATION

*Improve the "Call for Business" web page as a retail attraction tool.*

**DOWNTOWN BIZ WANTED**

Located about a mile away from Catawba River, historic downtown Morganton is fast attracting visitors from all across North Carolina with a wide range of family-friendly activities, events, and attractions. From outdoor concerts and art walks to farm-to-table dining options and craft breweries, Downtown Morganton is truly nature's playground.

Today, Downtown Morganton is a diversifying community of young families and baby boomers seeking entertainment and adventure at accessible price points.

**At this time, Downtown Morganton is seeking tenants that offer:**

- Adventure/Entertainment** (e.g. bowling alley, climbing walls, children's museums)
- Sporting and Hobby goods**
- Children's Toys**
- General Merchandise and Hardware**
- Clothing and Accessories** (e.g. jewelry, hats, leather goods)
- Specialty natural foods** (e.g. honey, jams, spices and tea, chocolate and confectionery, sandwich shop)
- Souvenirs and Miscellaneous goods** (e.g. souvenir, pet supply)

You are here: Home > Biz Resources > Biz Wanted Back to Top



Left / Suggested New Layout for Morganton's 'Call for Business' Web Page / Source: LOA

## Downtown Morganton is OPEN FOR BUSINESS!

**Facade Improvement Incentive Grants and Loans:** Up to \$500 in matching grants per façade for painting/maintenance; up to \$500 in matching grants per sign for new and unique signage; up to \$2000 per facade for renovations. All are at a 1:1 match. Awning replacement is available as a 0% interest loan on a first come, first serve basis and amounts granted are dependent on the amount of funding.

**Revolving Loan Fund:** The City of Morganton Main Street Small Business Loan Program (SBLP) was originally funded from the NC Main Street Solutions Fund Grant and was set up as a competitive, low interest loan program. The fund offered up to \$20,000 for new or expanding small businesses that employed individuals that met established goals and criteria. The funds for this program have been depleted, thus, it is no longer a viable option. If possible, future funding should be allocated to this revolving loan fund.

**VEDIC:** The Valdese Economic Development Investment Corporation (VEDIC) is a non-profit corporation and equal opportunity lender that promotes prosperity for local small businesses. They also seek partnerships with other lenders for their applicants. Some of VEDIC's programs include the Burke Business Loan Program, the IRP Region Loan Program (USDA), and the Micro-Entrepreneur Assistance Loan Program (USDA). VEDIC's is a wonderful resource for entrepreneurs who may not qualify for a bank loan. Visit [www.vedicnc.net](http://www.vedicnc.net) to learn more.

### Examples of Existing Retail Attraction Tools: Downtown Incentive Grants and Loans

**The Development Incentive Grant:** The DIG program is designed to accomplish a combination of goals related to economic and community development efforts identified within the adopted Mission 2030 Plan. DIG funds can only be made available to those projects determined otherwise unfeasible or unachievable "but for" the combined efforts of public and private participation. The City designated DIG Zones within areas of the city that were determined key economic growth areas by the plan. The projects must comply with community adopted standards and program guidelines established for that zone.

**CDBG Small Business Loan:** The City of Morganton Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Small Business Loan Program (SBLP) is a competitive program offering startup or expansion opportunities within the city limits for loan funds up to \$75,000. All businesses requesting funds between \$5,000 and \$30,000 must create at least one new job that meets the HUD income criteria. Businesses requesting greater than \$30,000 must be able to create a minimum of 10 new full time job positions within 1 year of funding, with 51% for individuals who fall within HUD Low to Moderate Income and Household Income criteria.

## Retail Attraction Committee

A Retail Attraction Committee can be tasked with developing and refining top retail categories to prospect and visit ‘like districts’ such as Black Mountain, Blowing Rock, Asheville and Hendersonville in order to scout prospects. Regular meetings (monthly or quarterly) can be scheduled for the committee to discuss prospects before engaging in an active pursuit. Prospects should meet the criteria of being able to offer retail that meets local demand (e.g., young families, baby boomers, Hispanic population) and visitor demand. Committee members should be responsible for reaching out directly to prospective business owners with a marketing package for Downtown Morganton that describes local customers and market demand, illustrates available spaces within the core retail intersection, and lists available resources and incentives for new businesses. A good resource is “Improving Tenant Mix”, a step-by-step guide for retail attraction by commercial district managers, available free of charge from the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC). It is a useful

resource for the staff at Downtown Morganton as well as members of the Retail Attraction Committee.

The information and responses collected by committee members would then be maintained in a common prospect database with business contact information, broker contact information, lifestyle/price point of business, square footage required by business, desired rent, locations of other businesses and strength of prospect. This will enable the committee to keep track of when to follow-up with prospects and be persistent.

This type of committee has been set up in cities like Pittsburgh, PA, to ensure contiguous active ground floor retail uses.

### 5.9 RECOMMENDATION

*Initiate a retail attraction committee.*



**Send the retail attraction committee members to retailers from similar markets or ‘like districts’**

**Top, left to right / Barbecue sauce samples (Blowing Rock, NC) / Wine market (Black Mountain, NC) / Honey shop (Asheville, NC)**

## Downtown Lodging

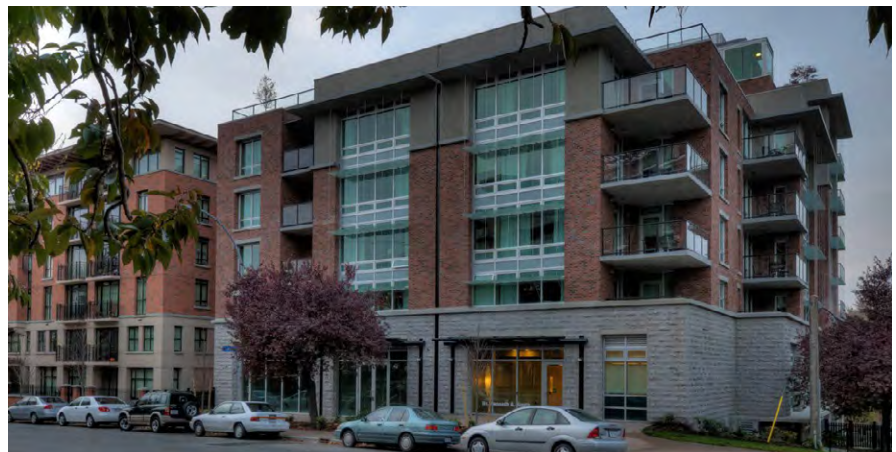
At this time, there are no downtown lodging options for out-of-town visitors. Morganton is situated close to a network of state parks, natural trails, outdoor recreation facilities, wineries and heritage sites that attract seasonal visitors. These attractions and those located in downtown are bringing in visitors in the form of families, millennials and young professionals, and empty nesters. A downtown lodging option would likely attract many of these visitors thereby keeping much of their spending during their visits in downtown versus in surrounding competing areas.

A downtown hotel would not only drive visitor demand, but it could extend the stays of business representatives in town for conferences or meetings, which could increase sales for local businesses. In Center City, Philadelphia, for example, the presence of over 43 hotels enabled a record 3.11 million occupied hotel room nights in 2015, augmenting retail spending in the downtown by an estimated \$411,790,849.

In downtowns with large institutions such as hospitals and colleges, business travelers and group travelers are already common visitors for conferences and work exchange programs. In Morganton, institutions such as the North Carolina

School for the Deaf and the Carolinas Blue Ridge Healthcare Center already bring in a number of patients and professional visitors throughout the year. These groups come through downtown normally between Monday and Thursday and shop or look for things to do at later hours of the day, after consultations or conference sessions. Hotels, with leasable venues, can also facilitate year-round conventions and trade shows that are often attended by out-of-towners.

At the same time, leisure tourists often visit and occupy hotels Friday through Monday. According to Center City District, PA, “overnight leisure tourists are likely to spend more at restaurants and retailers and help account for the strong retail demand created by tourists in Center City”. Two feasibility studies have been conducted to date, the second more comprehensive than the first. The study clearly states the need for a hotel and/or bed and breakfast in downtown.



**Above / Urban hotel (Victoria, BC)**

Boutique hotels that have smaller footprints and urban characteristics like ground floor active uses and/or retail are ideal for downtown Morganton.

## Programming and Experience

### Build Regular Ambient and Impulse Programming

Downtown Morganton has been successful in organizing small- and large-scale events and activities throughout the year. With the support of local arts and cultural institutions and groups, the ambient and impulse programming may be enhanced. CoMMA, for example, is already seeking a 200 seat venue downtown that will introduce new series of entertainment and cultural programming closer to the Core Retail Intersection. This will benefit retailers by attracting greater foot traffic at different times of the day, and potentially encouraging retailers to stay open later to capture customer demand.

#### 5.10 RECOMMENDATION

*Working with community partners, enhance ambient and impulse programming around the Core Retail Intersection.*



*See also Section 7.3: Focus Activity into the Core (p. 109)*

### The Courthouse Square Activation

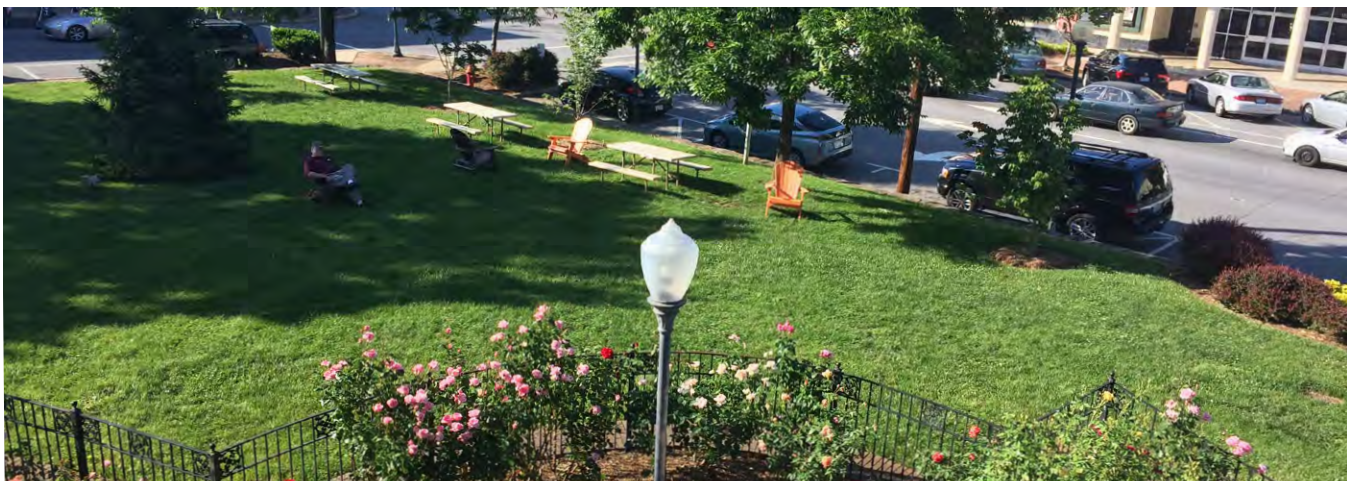
The Courthouse Square, situated at the core retail intersection, should function as a key interactive public space that attracts families to downtown with spaces designed for all age groups. Interactive water features, like the one located in Martha's Park, have become a popular design feature implemented in urban and recreational public spaces. They are growing in popularity among parents and children as a convenient alternative to traditional swimming pools. In Morganton, the water element is also a unique way to pay homage to the Catawba River. With the help of local artists, lighting and sculptures can be incorporated to enhance interactive water features.

#### 5.11 RECOMMENDATION

*Utilize interactive water to activate The Courthouse Square on a regular basis and attract families to the Core Retail Intersection.*



*See also Section 7.2: Maximize The Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space (p. 108)*



The Courthouse Square awaiting future improvements to activate the core intersection of downtown. Pictured are some temporary improvements for use during the weeks around the design charrette: plastic chairs and picnic tables.



## 5.4 Downtown Housing Strategy

### Market Considerations

The total latent demand for downtown housing is 1,868 units — 720 dwelling units within a 10-minute walk of downtown and 119 units under construction — leaving a deficit of 1,029 units. This estimation is based upon the assumption that at least 30% of residents aged 15-34, or millennials, and 30% of residents aged 50-74, baby boomers, prefer city living and was derived from “Calculating Your Market for City Living” a 2015 study conducted by Billy Parrish Consulting.

Additional workforce is expected to enter Morganton with the opening of the North Carolina School of Science and Math (Western Campus) in 2020. NCSSM workforce and associated family members will require housing, of which a portion may be located downtown. A potential 10,000 square foot Western Piedmont Community College incubator space or ‘maker space’ located downtown may also draw students to live downtown.

At this time, there is a premium for downtown rental and owner housing. Downtown residential rents per square foot are higher by 60% for one bedroom units and 92% for two bedroom units than those in neighborhoods just outside of downtown. One example is King Street Court, an upscale townhome development with open, modern units in walking distance to the core retail intersection. In 2015, one

unit was listed at a sale price 95% higher than the city average.

### Improve Housing Stock via Institutional Partnerships

The latent demand for downtown housing should be met through new construction as well as the rehabilitation of existing housing within a 10-minute walk of downtown. In many small towns across the country, institutional partnerships have resulted in improved downtown housing stock via the implementation of home improvement grant programs. For example, the Oswego Renaissance Association (Oswego, NY) is a partnership between the Shineman Foundation, Pathfinder Bank, Novelis, Exelon Generation, State University of New York Oswego and others. This strategic, multi-year program aims to revitalize the City of Oswego’s neighborhoods by providing grants to homeowners in four targeted city areas.

In particular, the annual Renaissance Block Challenge Grant provides matching funds to property owners who apply in clusters of 5 or more properties within a single block. Each property owner receives a matching grant award for up to \$1,000 in expenses towards exterior home improvements, landscaping, and street improvements. In 2015 alone, seventeen separate city blocks participated and to date has led to over \$1.5 million of private investment being leveraged into Oswego’s Renaissance Block neighborhoods.



Existing housing stock in one neighborhood at the edge of downtown Morganton

### 5.12 RECOMMENDATION

*Recruit developers familiar with towns like Morganton to implement urban housing in downtown.*

### 5.13 RECOMMENDATION

*Work to meet demand for downtown housing and improve the housing stock through institutional partnerships.*

Blake R. Revis

3-14-1958

to

9-4-2014

by  
FHS class of 1977  
and friends



6

# **Public Art Action Plan**

**The Art Scene Today**

**Policies that Promote Art**

**Logistics & Art Champions**

**Funding Strategies for Public Art**

**Finding Community Partnerships**

**Public Art Programming**

**Top 4 Public Art Projects in 2 Years**

## 6.1 The Art Scene Today

### Events

Morganton cares deeply about the arts. Downtown's lively performing arts roster includes formal and informal activities with a wide range of participating organizations or establishments, as well as in a variety of public and private spaces.

#### The events organized today include:

- » Main Stage productions at the City of Morganton Commercial Auditorium (CoMMA) include national tours of Broadway musicals, concerts, plays, and community events, such as the Messiah. CoMMA's outdoor amphitheater Back Porch series includes music performances and movies.
- » The popular TGIF live concerts on The Courthouse Square lawn throughout May, June, and July each year are sponsored by local businesses.
- » Fonta Flora, Sidetracked Taproom, Brown Mountain Bottle Works, Catawba Brewery, Wisteria Restaurant, and The Grind Cafe's upper wine room present music performances by regional musicians.
- » Sherri's School of Dance and Studio Dance Academy provide classes and shows.

### Visual Arts

The visual arts are also well represented in Morganton and growing in number and importance as downtown destinations. Artists and artisans have set up shops and more are moving in, attracted by the area's affordability and charm.

#### Some visual art destinations include:

- » Hamilton Williams Gallery & Studio combines a pottery studio with a changing exhibition space to showcase the owner's work along with other talented regional artisans. The owner also teaches hands-on pottery workshops.
- » JenLuma Clayworks Studio (101 N. Sterling Street)
- » West Union Art Studio where 6 ceramic artists showcase their work (113 W. Union Street)
- » OSuzannah's Yarn on Union (130 W. Union Street)
- » Oak Hill Ironworks opened its showroom for custom residential and commercial ornamental ironwork and wood furniture at 107 S. King Street in June, 2017.

#### Changing art exhibitions include:

- » Art in the Hall, a juried art program curated by City staff and showcased in Morganton City Hall, which is located in a renovated mill project known as Morganton Trading Company.
- » Eight exhibitions a year are mounted in the Burke Arts Council's Jailhouse Gallery located on The Courthouse Square lawn.
- » Tour d'Art, Morganton's downtown arts crawl, promotes artists, shops, and galleries the third Thursday of the month.
- » Exhibits are posted by The Main Street office through Facebook and D2U, a weekly email blast, and also found on The Discover Morganton interactive map on the city's website.

### Arts Education

Morganton is experiencing growth in arts education for children and adults. Several hands-on art classes, summer art camps, and workshops have opened downtown.

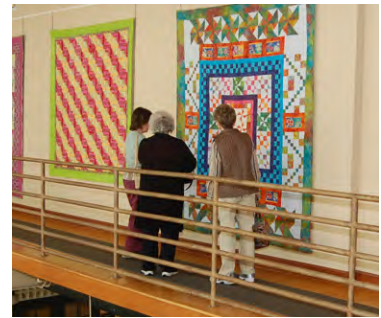
#### Educational programs include:

- » The Old School Studio (TOSS) offers an 8 week summer camp for ages 6-12 that is co-presented by TOSS and the Burke Arts Council. TOSS' 9 month residency program provides an artist a small stipend and exhibition in exchange for teaching after school students. (510 S. College Street)
- » Sketch is a fine arts studio for kids and families offering group and private classes, workshops, open studio time, and camps! It's a place where curiosity is sparked and fun is limitless! (114 N. Sterling St.)
- » You, Me and Some Glue (YMSG) offers hand building pottery, wood cutout and music classes. (First United Methodist Church, 200 N. King Street)
- » Western Piedmont Community College (WPCC) offers continuing education certificates and diplomas in clay and wood professional crafts. Classes in sculpture and welding are offered as well. The clay program schedules classes with visiting potters and faculty at The Penland School in Spruce Pine, NC.
- » Grace Ridge Retirement Community provides access to lecture programs at WPCC for its residents.



DOWNTOWN MORGANTON  
**TOUR D'ART**  
 THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017

- 1 Hamilton Williams Gallery & Studio**  
403 E Union St • 828-438-1595
- 2 Morganton City Hall**  
305 E Union St • 828-437-8863
- 3 Sketch Art Space**  
114 N Sterling St • 828-228-4930
- 4 Jenluma Clayworks**  
101 B N Sterling St • 828-525-0350  
(basement level)
- 5 Treat**  
100 W Union St • 828-475-1082
- 6 Emma's: Art & Gifts for the Soul**  
106 W Union St • 828-390-2899
- 7 Burke Arts Council**  
115 E Meeting St • 828-433-7282
- 8 The Kitchen Connection**  
108 W Union St • 828-438-8400
- 9 West Union Art Studios**  
113 W Union St • 828-403-4148
- 10 OSuzannah! Yarn on Union**  
130 W Union St • 828-430-3300
- 11 Oak Hill Iron+Wood**  
107 S King St • 828-437-5348



**Above** / The Tour d'Art Map (also known as The Art Crawl)  
**Right & Below** / Citizens viewing rotating installations at Art in the Hall at City Hall



**The Discover Morganton interactive map at [www.morganton.gov](http://www.morganton.gov) includes current information on today's art scene in downtown.**

## 6.2 Policies that Promote Art

Morganton’s investment in arts and culture starts with a belief in and commitment to the fundamental role they play in building a community’s sense of place. Having the proper policies in place will foster the inclusion of art in downtown Morganton.

To begin to set the stage, designating the entirety of downtown as a Cultural Arts District will make a clear declaration that the city is a place that values art. To begin the process of District designation, the Burke County Arts Council and the City of Morganton should apply as partners to the North Carolina Arts Council (NCAC), with either serving as the lead applicant. The foremost benefit of Cultural District designation is the availability of tax incentives to artists living or working in the district, businesses located there, and developers and investors interested in creating arts facilities and spaces. Certified Arts & Cultural Districts are eligible for grants and loans from the North Carolina Arts Council’s SmART Initiative Program to support planning and design of arts-oriented infrastructure, planning, design and implementation of public art projects in districts, including park, greenway and trail projects, wayfinding, and access to a low-interest state loan program to encourage historic preservation. Districts also receive branding and marketing assistance from the Department of Cultural Resources (the state umbrella agency for the NCAC).

The city can also provide tangible incentives to local businesses, such as tax deductions, for using local artisans for property/building enhancements. Local art is highlighted, the aesthetics of downtown are improved and owners receive a tax deduction for their patronage.

As part of the downtown overlay district, the city can require private developers to include public art as part of their plans. The art can be included on the developer’s property as part of the adjacent streetscape or as a fee-in-lieu payment made to the city to utilize the funds for previously approved art initiatives in downtown.

Bringing students of all ages into the art scene of downtown is a fun way to foster creative expression. A few simple guidelines for artist led student projects will help specify quality and manage

logistics. Examples would include sidewalk chalk art festivals, yarn bombing and even murals.



**Above /** Example of “yarn bombing,” a tactical artistic expression where colorful yarn is wrapped around vertical elements like street trees and sign posts

### 6.1 RECOMMENDATION

*Designate the Downtown Municipal Improvement District boundary as the Cultural Arts District boundary.*

### 6.2 RECOMMENDATION

*Incentivize local businesses to hire local artists/artisans for decorative murals, ironwork and other enhancements.*

### 6.3 RECOMMENDATION

*Develop an ordinance that requires public art in private development.*

### 6.4 RECOMMENDATION

*Write guidelines specifying quality and logistics for the startup art projects downtown that begin small and involve artists and students.*

## 6.3 Logistics & Art Champions

Launching new strategies that identify Morganton's creative community of artists, art stakeholders and stewards, and providing education programs about public art and access to information will build grassroots support to ensure the implementation of policy recommendations.

An oversight group such as a Public Art Commission would be appropriate for Morganton and could assist in policy and implementation matters. Additionally, supportive public art staff could coordinate artists' services, implementation of public art in civic spaces, grant writing, public/private collaborations and serve as a liaison with Morganton stakeholders.

The public art coordinator's role would include the following tasks:

- » Coordinate programs between Main Street, Burke Arts Council, WPCC, Office of Tourism and CoMMA
- » Build a database of creative individuals in Morganton and Burke County. The database should support the public's interest in knowing who the artists are, what they do, and where to find their artwork, music, dance, and theater activities.
- » Develop a city/county marketing and communications plan, including an online calendar, to expand awareness of Morganton's cultural events and creative activities.
- » Inform community groups of the city's current cultural programs, events, and future projects.
- » Distribute the Tour D'Art map (page 82) through the Office of Tourism and downtown merchants and create a Downtown Art Trail. Distribute a digital version of the map (use Downtown Morganton's Arts map) and link to the Tourism website.
- » Issue RFQ's for site-specific projects that use public art to enhance the downtown greenway, parks and alleys.

- » Develop an Artist Selection Process for Commissioning Public Art:
  - Most popular option: Write an Open Call for Entries/Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that describes the project and how to apply. Artists submit a package that includes a resume and slides of their work by a specific date. A selection panel comprised of artists and art professionals reviews submissions and identifies finalists for interviews. Criteria includes aesthetic quality of past work, ability to respond to project criteria, context and deadline.
  - Another option: A Limited Invitational Process/Curated Pool of Artists gives staff the opportunity to develop a short list of artists who are qualified to accomplish the commission and invites artists to apply. A selection panel is convened and its recommendation is approved by the Arts Commission or other reviewing body as designated by the governing ordinance.

### 6.5 RECOMMENDATION

*Appoint a Public Art Commission.*

### 6.6 RECOMMENDATION

*Establish a public art coordinator position.*

**“This world  
is but a canvas to  
our imagination.”  
-Henry David Thoreau**

## 6.4 Funding Strategies for Public Art

Communities throughout the country are investing in their arts and cultural assets to revitalize downtowns, instill a strong sense of place and pride, attract creative workers and cultural tourists, and create sustainable economic development. The arts are an economic driver, an industry that provides jobs, generates government revenue, and is the cornerstone of tourism. A combination of private sector, government and non-profit financial resources are necessary to ensure success.

Percent-for-art programs are the primary method of funding public art in the U.S. Legislative ordinances allocate a percentage of Planning Departments' Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budgets in a state, county, and city to art.

The Burke County Arts Council will remain a key player in the coordination and funding of art in downtown Morganton. The Council can explore the creation of smaller micogrants available through fundraising and sponsorships. One example of this from the Vermont Art Council is an Animating Infrastructure Grant (ranges from \$1,000,-\$5,000) to support community projects that integrate art with infrastructure.

Additional funding strategies are outlined in the following recommendations:

### 6.7 RECOMMENDATION

*Utilize a Percent-for-Art Program to fund public art in both city and county capital projects. Consider adopting a "Percent-For-Art Ordinance."*

### 6.8 RECOMMENDATION

*Secure sponsorships for temporary downtown art programs from local businesses.*

### 6.9 RECOMMENDATION

*Increase downtown's special district tax to fund downtown placemaking projects.*

### 6.10 RECOMMENDATION

*Explore the placement of a public bond (city, county or WPCC) to fund public art that expands cultural and eco-tourism in downtown.*

### 6.11 RECOMMENDATION

*Create Burke County Arts Council Animating Infrastructure Grants.*

### 6.12 RECOMMENDATION

*Pursue grants with The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) for an environmental art project in Natural and Cultural Resources or Food and Farming.*

### 6.13 RECOMMENDATION

*Pursue federally funded "Our Town" grants through the National Endowment for the Arts.*

### 6.14 RECOMMENDATION

*Establish a program fund, housed in the Office of Economic Development, to seed small prototype projects and encourage matching funds and participation from local merchants and Morganton's property owners.*



# Funding Case Studies

## SmART Initiative

The SmART Initiative is an economic development program created by the North Carolina Arts Council. The intent of the program is to designate smART communities and form a partnership of local resources, NCAC staff and expert consults to envision transformative plans. Organization for a SmART Initiative brings a city together as it requires more players/partners from different sectors. Fundraising plans are developed and are sometimes supplemented through grants of \$15,000-\$30,000. (not currently available) The City of Durham parlayed its' SmART Initiative grant into a \$100,000 Our Town (NEA) grant to do two major art projects in downtown Durham.

Visit the following site for more information and examples:  
<https://www.ncarts.org/economic-development/smart-initiative>

**Right /**  
Durham SmART  
Initiative Plan  
Foster Street  
Vision Graphic  
Source:  
*mikyung kim  
design*



## KaBoom! Play Everywhere

KaBoom! offers Play Everywhere Challenge grants to communities through a partnership with Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Target, Playworld, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development and the National Endowment for the Arts. The initiative is all about finding creative ways to help families fit play into their everyday lives. The program rotates the geography of the grant and have opened up national competitions in the past, but the frequency is dependent upon funding. Therefore, it is important to sign up to receive notifications about new opportunities.

Visit the following site for more information and examples:  
[https://kaboom.org/playability/play\\_everywhere/national\\_challenge](https://kaboom.org/playability/play_everywhere/national_challenge)

**Right / Winner**  
of 2016  
Grant City of  
Redwood,  
Giant  
Adirondack  
Chairs &  
Mobile  
Recreation  
(Redwood,  
CA) Source:  
*KaBoom & City  
of Redwood*



## 6.5 Finding Community Partnerships

Partnerships are an effective mechanism used by communities to develop transformative arts projects. Facilitating the involvement of city and county departments, private developers, business owners, lenders, foundations and arts and educational organizations is essential to the long term success of an arts driven project.

For example, Western Piedmont Community College(WPCC) is interested in creating a multi-purpose maker space for startups. The space could be used for instruction in industrial arts, engineering, and electronic fields, as well as providing opportunities for mentoring, apprenticeships, and business classes for artists. Additional possibilities for this development include a retail shop for products made by students and faculty, a bookstore, a gallery, and a theater space. This project would certainly draw more students into downtown.

## Potential Partnerships

**The following recommendations initiate or grow partnerships with the following institutions: Western Piedmont Community College, CoMMA, Grace Ridge Retirement Community, the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) , and Simply Green Recycling Service**

### 6.15 RECOMMENDATION

*Partner with WPCC to create a multi-purpose maker space in downtown.*

### 6.16 RECOMMENDATION

*Coordinate with WPCC's Professional Crafts Program Coordinator to create a series of historic art tiles as trail markers along the downtown Greenway.*

### 6.17 RECOMMENDATION

*Showcase WPCC's digital animation work and engage the program to create a temporary light piece for CoMMA's exterior.*

### 6.18 RECOMMENDATION

*Work with CoMMA on programming opportunities at The Courthouse Square including outdoor performing arts.*



Photosimulation of a possible WPCC creative flex-space at the corner of Green and Avery Streets

### 6.19 RECOMMENDATION

*Establish art related programming at the Grace Ridge Retirement Community including: an artist-in-residence program, hands-on workshops (sewing/quilt-making, photography, woodcarving, horticulture, etc.), artwork exhibits, and music events.*

### 6.20 RECOMMENDATION

*Meet with Western Piedmont Campus Planning to discuss the importance of environmental artists, particularly those working with water, waste and energy issues in communities throughout America.*

### 6.21 RECOMMENDATION

*Develop a water demonstration project in downtown Morganton that includes NCSSM's Sustainability Project Leaders, Linda Schmalbeck, Instructor of Biology, and an environmental artist working with water in urban regeneration (rain gardens, storm water, etc). Select a downtown site for the demonstration project with the help of the Department of Water Resources.*

### 6.22 RECOMMENDATION

*Craft a kinetic sculpture event that involves students from NCSSM and Morganton's public schools and culminates into a presentation on The Courthouse Square lawn.*

### 6.23 RECOMMENDATION

*Commission an environmental artist who creates artwork from recycled plastic through a partnership with Simply Green.*

### 6.24 RECOMMENDATION

*Collaborate with the science departments of local schools to utilize plastic to create artwork and showcase the results in downtown Morganton's storefronts and galleries. Sell it to benefit stream cleanup in the area.*



**Above /** Example of the city partnering with a local artist to create a cultural identity for Downtown Morganton: Table Rock and Hawksbill Silhouette bench by Dean Curfman



**“It simply isn’t an adventure worth telling if there aren’t any dragons.”**  
**-J.R.R. Tolkien**

## **Themed Collaborations**

**Note:** The following recommendations are simply an example of a themed art program that could spur a variety of events in downtown. Other downtowns have utilized similar programs with great success. One such example is the Mice on Main program in Greenville, SC. For the purposes of this document, dragons were considered as one possible theme. Further discussion will need to take place to firm up a final direction.

### **6.25 RECOMMENDATION**

*Conduct an annual sculpture competition with first prize becoming a permanent installation. Arrange the sculptures into an evolving “must see” downtown treasure hunt trail.*

### **6.26 RECOMMENDATION**

*Create sculpture business sponsorships to help build out the collection. Provide forms to artists and students in Morganton and arrange for their sponsorship by local businesses.*

### **6.27 RECOMMENDATION**

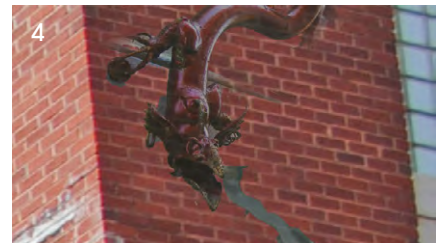
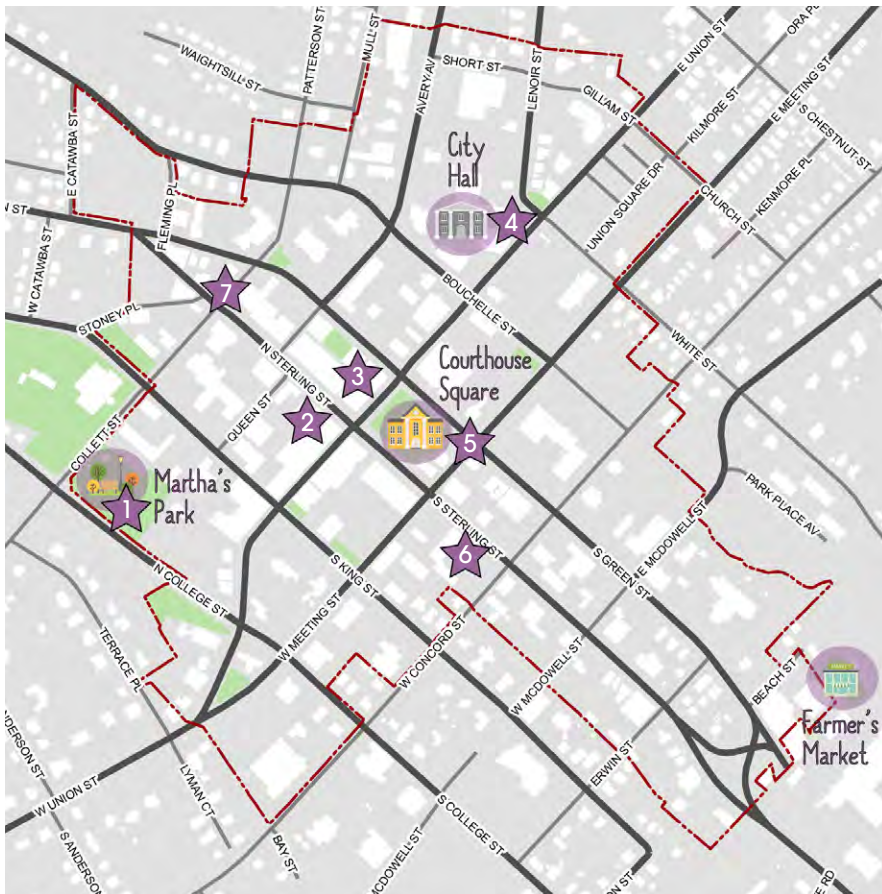
*Create an annual festival weekend featuring family workshops, e.g., drawings, masks, costumes, hats, etc., offered by The Old School Studio (TOSS) and others, that culminate in a parade around The Courthouse Square. Collaborate with Healing Dragons of Lake James and the Office of Tourism to cross-promote Morganton’s festival and the Lake James races through the multi-state Dragon Boat Races website.*

### **6.28 RECOMMENDATION**

*Create a themed scavenger hunt for children. The narrative for kids to follow on their journey around town should be available online or at kiosks in downtown, as well, as provide an answer key map.*

## Scavenger Hunt Narrative (Example Concept)

1. Horus is our oldest dragon and does not like the southern heat. He can usually be found around one of our city's splash pads.
2. Curly and Clive are two brothers who always stick together. They are small and like to stay out of the way! Check the public alleys for these guys.
3. Cameron loves an ice cold treat! He might be close to an ice cream shop.
4. Martin loves to create mischief and can usually be found near City Hall.
5. Diva likes to join in on the major festivities. She loves music and dancing so follow your ears!
6. Maria prefers visual art to music and is always with the local artists, which we proudly have a lot of here. If you can't find her at her own studio, she is probably with the Art's Council.
7. If you're with Maria on Sterling Street, then you can probably see her best friend Lucile from there. When you find her, make sure to slide down her giant tongue!



## 6.6 Public Art Programming

Programming that taps into local talent will promote the arts as an asset and essential part of Morganton's identity. A need exists to expand opportunities for residents to discover their creativity and champion the notion that the arts are inherent in everyone. Both public and private spaces in downtown should serve as locations for the following recommendations.

### 6.29 RECOMMENDATION

*Coordinate with property owners to participate in the downtown mural program; Fund the artist(s) fees and materials through local business sponsorships; Appoint a small selection committee for the mural program; Ask interested local artists to submit examples of their work; Create a modest budget for materials and installation/break down, insurance, etc.*

### 6.30 RECOMMENDATION

*Hold a series of "socials" in different venues to gather and celebrate creative talent in Morganton & Burke County.*

### 6.31 RECOMMENDATION

*Schedule a series of weekly "Makers Classes." Pay art instructors to teach for three hours each. Experiment with instructors and age groups to discover what people want to learn. Use empty first and second floors of downtown storefronts. Possibilities include knitting, photography, Hmong embroidery, bookmaking, drawing, etc.*

### 6.32 RECOMMENDATION

*Use the lawn of The Courthouse Square, downtown alleys, and sidewalks as flex space for events, temporary exhibitions, and pop-up arts activities of varying scales.*

### 6.33 RECOMMENDATION

*Prepare a Request For Qualifications to select a local artist or designer to create a logo for Morganton's recycling bins and boxes.*

**Expanding programming opportunities for residents will help them discover their creativity and champion the notion that the arts are inherent in everyone.**

## 6.7 Top 4 Public Art Projects in 2 Years

Art is something that evolves organically over time in a community, and the unforced nature of that is often appealing to creative individuals. However, there is merit in helping that process along, particularly by incorporating art in planned streetscape projects and offering a setting for local artists to test the waters. The city should set a goal to realize 4 public art projects in the next 2 years.



Inside West Union Studio



Example of integrated public art along the Rail Trail in Charlotte, NC

### The four projects are:

1. Launch a sales shop downtown featuring products made by local artists, including students. Promote through Office of Tourism and websites of the Burke and Caldwell Arts Councils, Office of Tourism, Main Street, and WPCC.
2. Integrate a themed public art initiative into the streetscape and infrastructure (crosswalks, banners, signage/wayfinding, utility boxes, sidewalks, etc.)
3. Create a vertical garden (perhaps in the shape of a dragon) on a public building facade to beautify, improve air quality and integrate nature into the built environment.
4. Expand Oak Hill Iron's commemorative benches to reinforce this unique identity within the core.



Example of a vertical garden  
Source: [www.outsiderswithin.com](http://www.outsiderswithin.com)



Custom bench on Sterling Street



Hand crafted bench on Union Street



Bench in front of movie theater







## **Key Goals**

**Restore Two-Way Operations**

**Maximize The Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space**

**Focus Activity into the Core**

**Diversify and Expand Housing**

**Connect to the Community**

**Embed Art into Everything**

**Have Fun and Experiment**

## 7.1 Restore Two-way Operation to the Union/Meeting & Sterling/Green Pairs

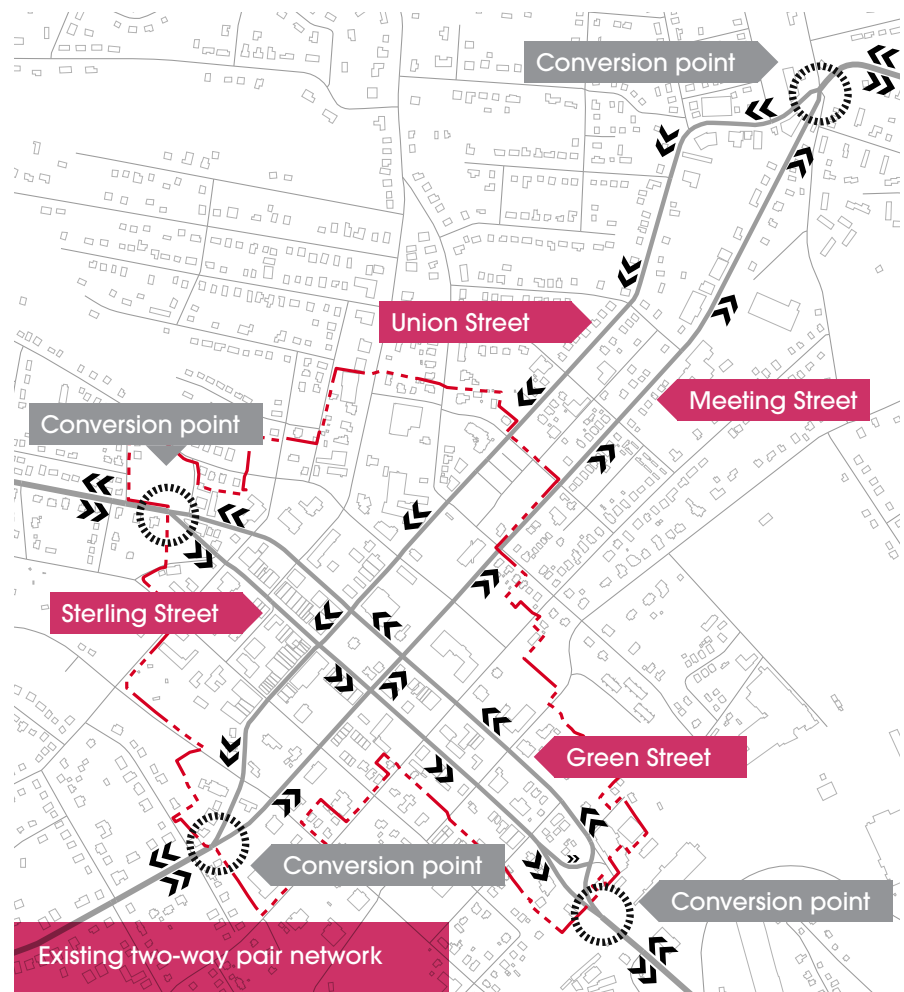
The backbone of the mobility network in downtown rests on four streets: Union, Sterling, Meeting and Green Streets. Unlike other streets in downtown (and in greater Morganton) they are multi-lane, one-way streets designed to operate as one-way pairs.

While these streets were historically designed as two-way, they were converted to one-way operation in the 1960s. The one advantage of multi-lane, one-way pairs is to move traffic quickly through an area. This is contrary to downtown's aspirations of attracting more people to park once and walk around, versus passing quickly through the area in a car. Restoring all streets back to two-way operation would:

- » Help to reduce driver confusion
- » Reduce indirect routes
- » Slow traffic and reduce crash rate
- » Increase retail visibility
- » Create a more walkable, safer pedestrian environment
- » Enhance the energy of a true Main & Main intersection (Union & Sterling)
- » Offer more cohesive gateway opportunities from all directions

### 7.1 RECOMMENDATION

*Convert the one-way pair system to two-way operation and carefully redesign the four impacted intersections.*



***Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time (excerpt from page 179)***  
Written by: Jeff Speck

One-ways wreck downtown retail districts for reasons beyond (faster and more aggressive) driving, principally because they distribute vitality unevenly, and often in unexpected ways. They have been known to kill stores consigned to the morning path to work, since people do most of their shopping on the evening path home. They also increase a situation in which half the stores on cross-streets lose their retail visibility, being located over the shoulders of passing drivers. They intimidate out-of-towners, who are afraid of becoming lost, and they frustrate locals, who are annoyed by all the circular motions and additional traffic lights they must pass through to reach their destinations.

The four intersections impacted by the conversion are illustrated in full detail on the following pages. The streets encircling The Courthouse Square are also explored in depth because this public space becomes the pivot point where both pairs intersect. Key characteristics of each redesign are noted in the captions.



**Intersection Redesign at North Green and North Sterling Streets:**



Key Characteristics of Redesign: new traffic signal, high visibility pedestrian crossings, improved crossings for greenway users, new bike lanes protected by parallel on street parking along Sterling Street, safer connection from downtown to the greenway plus onward to Catawba Meadows Park. reclaimed two diagonal parking spaces for outdoor dining at Fonta Flora, enhanced gateway treatment for Flat Iron District

Existing Conditions



Intersection at West Meeting and West Union Streets



Key Characteristics of Redesign: roundabout as gateway feature, bike lanes, cycle track

Existing Conditions



### Intersection at South Sterling and South Green Streets



Key Characteristics of Redesign: respect topography and rail infrastructure, new signal, bike lane running South Sterling Street, right turn only lane onto South Green Street, high visibility crosswalks, new land opened up by the redesign provides opportunity for significant gateway beautification including monumental signage and landscaping, wider sidewalk protected by planting strip under the rail overpass

Existing Conditions



Intersection at East Meeting and East Union Streets



Key Characteristics of Redesign: Minimizes the five point intersection to a typical four-way stop intersection (East Union & Huffman) by rerouting East Meeting Street (note: this would require the acquisition of private property and the removal of an existing structure on that property. An access drive would be installed to maintain connectivity to properties that were accessed through the previous alignment of East Meeting Street.), terminus of the downtown cycle track

**Intersection around The Courthouse Square**



Intersection Redesign Around The Courthouse Square  
\*\*\*Waiting on city for direction on reverse angle or angled parking

## Sterling Street Visual Terminus

The conversion of the one-way pair streets to two-way circulation will have a positive impact on private property. For example, with the existing one-way movement, a property that sits at the northwest corner of Sterling and Collett Streets is currently in the rear view mirror of motorists. Upon conversion to two-way, this property will become a highly visible terminus to Sterling Street. In fact, at one time, the Presnell House was located on the site and provided a stunning terminating vista. Today, an underutilized parking lot sits on the corner of Sterling and Collett Streets.



**Above** / The decorative facade of the Presnell house was the visual terminus of Sterling Street in 1910 / Diagram showing the buildings present along Sterling Street in 1910 with the Presnell house at the terminus

## Phased Improvements

Until the market supports new development on the site, interim solutions can activate the surface parking lot. The series of images on the following page illustrates phased strategies.

First, multi-modal enhancements should be implemented along with the two-way conversion. A new bike lane protected by on street parking will allow bicyclists to safely access the downtown greenway connector and Catawba Meadows Park. Access to greenways and open space are highly sought after and have positive impacts on property values.

Next, a variety of temporary projects should occupy part or all of this parking lot in order to better utilize the space and draw more interest and activity to this area. Temporary play equipment suitable for adults and children will bring fun and play into a semi-permanent pocket park. Alternatively, part or all of the parking area can be converted into a public plaza that includes movable furnishings. Painting the asphalt with bright colors will delineate the space and provide visual interest. Parking spaces can remain accessible for use during normal business hours, but otherwise, the space becomes a flexible urban plaza.

### 7.2 RECOMMENDATION

*Reimagine the terminus of Sterling Street after conversion of the one-way pair system. Utilize a phased approach that begins with tactical interventions.*





Sterling Street - 2017 One Way Existing Conditions



Sterling Street - Plan View Diagrams



**Above / 1** - Initial multi-modal enhancements including a protected bike lane / **2** - Temporary activation of the site with artistic play equipment / **3** - As the market allows, new development can better utilize the parcel and provide a visual terminus for Sterling Street.

## 7.2 Maximize The Courthouse Square as Flexible Public Space

The Courthouse Square is the emotional and historic center of the community. Essentially, life in downtown Morganton “begins at the square”. The historic structure no longer functions as the county courthouse, but it remains iconic. The land that makes up the square, although sloped, forms a traditional town square and is surrounded by the most concentrated commercial activity in downtown. However, the area can be more actively utilized. Overall, improvements focus on physical enhancements and programmatic strategies that bring vibrancy to the space and create a sense that the square belongs to the community and is open for all to enjoy.

### 7.3 RECOMMENDATION

*Simplify the landscape design and plant large shade trees along the edges of The Courthouse Square, which requires removing some smaller existing trees.*

### 7.4 RECOMMENDATION

*Remove the existing sidewalk from the old courthouse building to the Meeting Street edge and create an uninterrupted open lawn as a multi-use space.*

### 7.5 RECOMMENDATION

*Provide elements that activate the space including movable seating, a unique lighting strategy, interactive water elements and a permanent multi-use structure.*



**Left** / Photo of Morganton from the Broughton Hospital grounds, circa 1867. The Burke County Courthouse is seen at the high point in the center of town.

**Below, left to right** / Aerial view of The Courthouse Square existing conditions. / 1903 photo of The Courthouse Square from Green Street





1



2



3

**Design Inspiration**

1 / Playful signage encourages people to use the grassy areas (National Trust Property, England, Source: The Click Design)

2 / Structural element has rooftop accessibility (St. Elizabeth's East Gateway Pavilion, Washington, D.C., Source: Eric Taylor)

3 / Unique seasonal and year-round lighting (The Courthouse Square, Moultrie, GA, Source: The Moultrie Observer)

4 / Interactive water elements provide soft background noise and a cooling effect during hot weather (Tokyo, Japan, Source: Tok'yall Blogspot)

5 / Colorful movable seating allows flexible use for groups of various sizes or for individual use (Shelby, NC)

6 / Architectural stone wall with cascading water (Teardrop Park, NY)



4



5



6

### The Courthouse Square Design Option A: Pavilion and Interactive Water Feature

This design option takes advantage of festival activity already occurring at the corner of Green & Meeting Streets. A temporary tent is regularly set up in this location for the TGIF Concert series. In this design, a permanent pavilion serves as a stage venue but is flexible enough to accommodate the Farmer's Market as well. A grand staircase gives access from the Meeting Street sidewalk to the gently sloping open lawn. The lawn serves as flexible space and is sloped gently upward toward the courthouse building, which provides an amphitheater effect.

At the corner of Meeting and Sterling Streets, an interactive water feature is proposed. A cascading water retaining wall and pergolas with swings wrap the edge opposite the street. With the water turned off, this space easily doubles as an urban plaza.

The intersection of Green and Union Streets is proposed as a flexible space with movable seating while the intersection of Union and Sterling will remain largely untouched. The memorials in this quadrant are not likely to change, but some maintenance of the landscape in this area is needed. By creating smaller quadrants or rooms within the larger space, programming of more intimate events is possible.

#### Key Features

- » Large Multi-Use Open Air Pavilion at Intersection of Green and Meeting Streets (utilized for both farmer's market and performances)
- » Sloping Lawn for Seating & Natural Play
- » Interactive Water Feature at Corner of Sterling and Meeting Streets

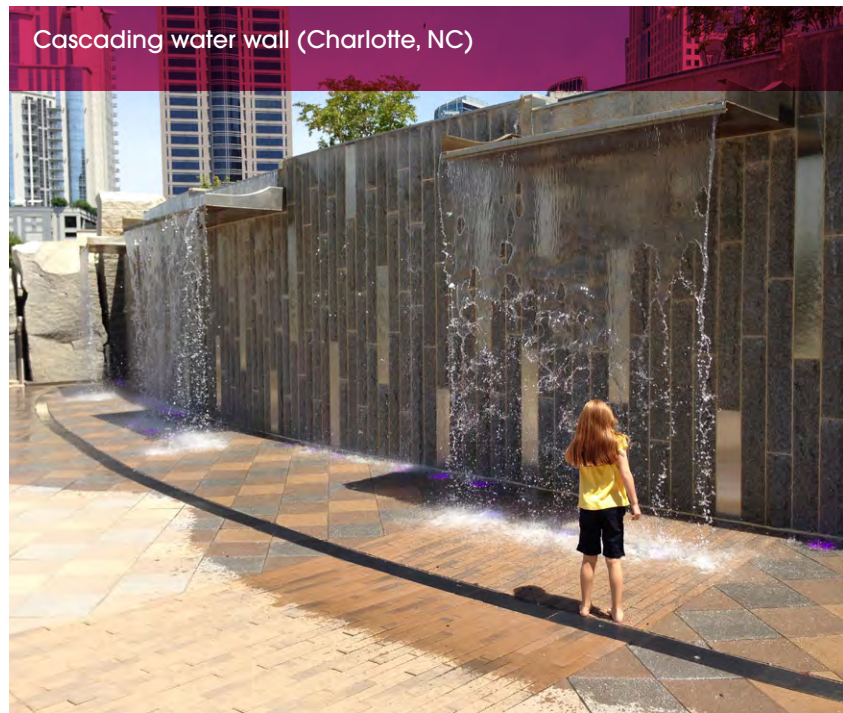
Design Option A: open lawn, flexible space with movable seating, corner pavilion/stage, corner interactive water feature



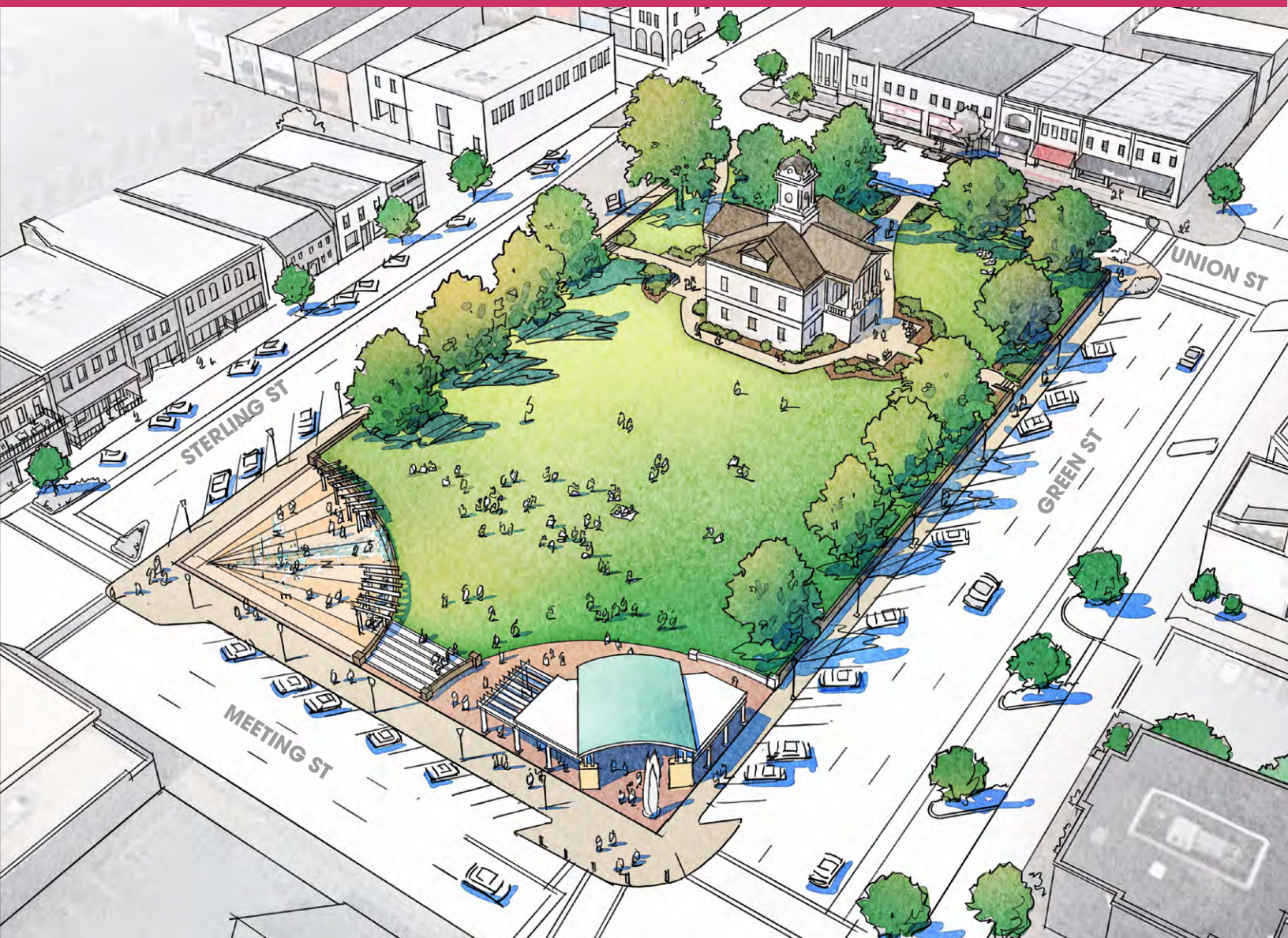
Open air pavilion (Winston Salem, NC)



Cascading water wall (Charlotte, NC)



Aerial view of The Courthouse Square Design Option A



**The Courthouse Square Design Option B: Flexible Market Building**

This design option takes a different approach from Option A and uses the eastern edge of The Courthouse Square along Meeting Street for a two story flexible market building and adjacent flex areas. These areas on each side the market building are surfaced with stone dust and outfitted with movable tables and chairs. A grand staircase gives access to the second story of the market building while a gradual ramp provides access to the open lawn behind the market.

This option has a smaller interactive water feature located at the corner of Green and Union Streets and is surrounded by umbrellas and movable Adirondack chairs. This location takes advantage of the energy spilling out of the movie theater and Brown Mountain Bottleworks.

Just as in Option A, the quadrant at the intersection of Union and Sterling will remain largely untouched.

**Key Features**

- » Multi-Use Market Building Centered on Space (street level utilized for table vendors during market time, restrooms, storage and concessions; lawn level utilized as performance space)
- » Additional Multi-Use Space at Corners of Meeting Street (Permeable Surface with Trees utilized for tent vendors and movable umbrella style tables/ chairs)
- » Level Lawn for Seating & Natural Play
- » Interactive Water Feature in Union/Green Quadrant with Movable Adirondack Chairs under Three Existing Shade Trees

Design Option B - flexible space including interactive water element, flexible market building with adjacent shaded seating areas on permeable base, open lawn



Shaded flexible space with permeable crushed stone walkway and movable seating (Dallas, TX)



Rooftop Terrace at Memorial Union (Wisconsin Union, Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison)



Aerial view of The Courthouse Square Design Option B



### 7.3 Focus Activity into the Core

The intersection of Union and Sterling Streets is the “Main-and-Main” of downtown Morganton. The historic buildings are organized to allow for ground floor retail spaces with office or housing on the upper floors. The uses within these buildings and redevelopment opportunities should reflect this traditional mix of uses by concentrating active ground floor commercial spaces in this area. Chapter 5 refers to this as the core retail intersection. In Section 5.3 Downtown Retail Strategy: Strengthening Retail through Activation, ten recommendations are provided related to building retail success and programming opportunities for activation.

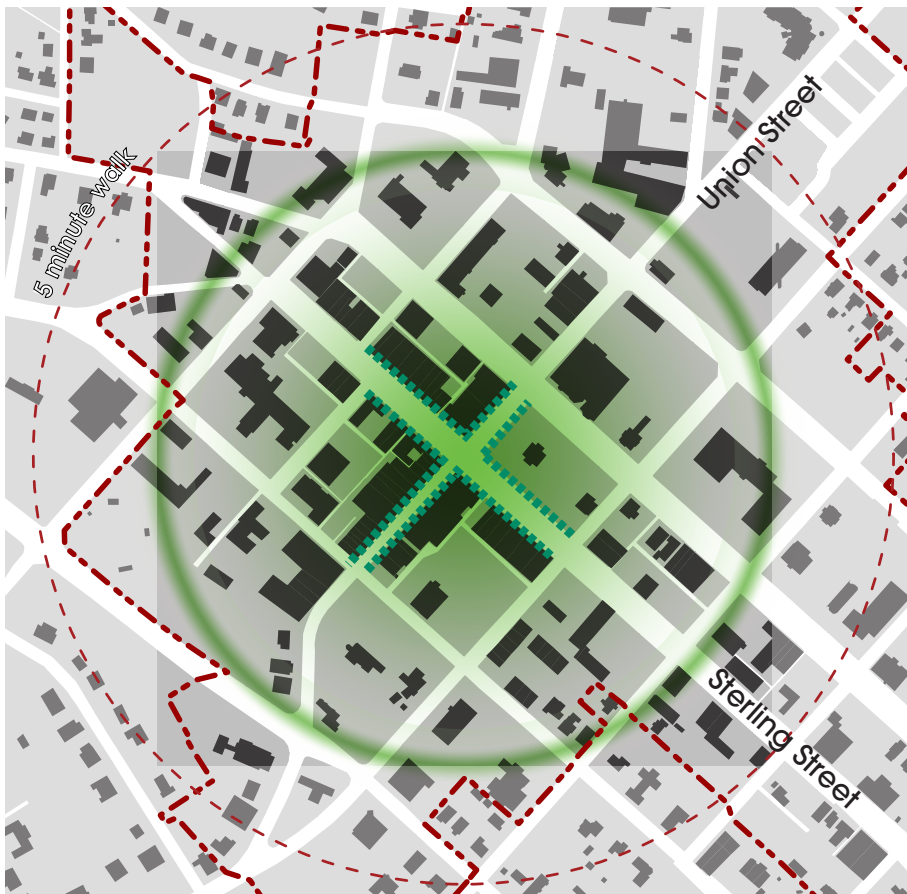
#### Bringing Nature’s Playground into the Core

Activating ground floors and strategic programming are only a portion of the equation in creating true vibrancy in the core. The physical streetscape

character is also a key component that enhances the walkable character of downtown Morganton. The County’s tourism theme of Nature’s Playground has not been fully explored in downtown, and the urban tree canopy must be of superior quality as part of that storyline. The next page offers an in depth look at the value of urban trees in placemaking. A more detailed streetscape master plan should be created that includes an evaluation of existing trees, suggestions for new plantings, and below ground recommendations..

### 7.6 RECOMMENDATION

*Develop a downtown streetscape master plan to evaluate the existing canopy and create a strategy within the core for species and subsurface treatments..*



**Left / New Main & Main** - The intersection of Sterling and Union Streets is the current center of vibrancy, any new efforts should build off this core of energy

**Above, top to bottom** / Sterling Street at main intersection  
Middle / Union Street at main intersection



## The Value of Urban Trees in Placemaking

The elements of the public realm—including buildings, infrastructure, landscaping, furnishings & signage, hardscape and water—intertwine to determine how charming a place feels and how much it is loved by the community.

Planting in an urban setting can be challenging because of limited space, compacted soils, poor air quality, and limited natural lighting. However, the landscape should not be seen as an appendage tagged on after the construction of a beautiful building or block. The landscape, trees particularly, need to be viewed as a key public investment by the city, which will help ensure trees reach their potential as placemakers.

The importance of trees to society is largely understood—they bring cultural, environmental, psychological, economic, and physical value to our communities. Urban trees, in particular, add value with their aesthetic beauty, but also through providing shade from the heat, and creating safety barriers between pedestrians and vehicles. Understanding their added value gives the city an incentive for allocating funding upfront to ensure that proper soil quality and quantity (elements vital to a tree's long-term health) are included when budgeting for capital improvement projects.

**Aesthetic Beauty** Urban trees have the power to transform the severest scene into a place worth experiencing. A beautiful, tree-lined street can create a strong sense of community and civic pride. Trees also visually signal the change of seasons, further adding to the memories we have of a place—twinkling lights on bare branches in the winter or spring flowers symbolizing hope for warmer months to come. The beauty of place is not just about vanity in the case of trees, this attractiveness can also have healing qualities for chronic mental fatigue according to the University of Washington's project Green Cities: Good Health.

Studies have shown that the presence of nature in a city, specifically trees in the streetscape, have a scientifically-proven effect on increasing

serotonin levels in our brains, which provide a natural calming effect. Places that are stunning, particularly with beautiful landscapes, provide comfort in an otherwise complex environment.

**Providing Shade (or sun)** Let's face it, no one likes to stand in the blazing sun on a hot summer day. Being physically cool provides a comfort level that makes walking down the street an enjoyable experience. The canopies of street trees provide much-needed shade to our urban environments and often cool the air by nine degrees - according to research done by NC State University. As a bonus, trees shield the sun's damaging UV rays. During winter, deciduous street trees allow sunlight to warm us and make a bitter, cold place more tolerable. Places that increase our comfort level entice us to stay longer.

**Safety Barrier & Speed Deterrent** Street trees, and even large pots, help provide an extra level of safety for pedestrians on sidewalks. Lining a street with trees creates a barrier between traffic and also slows traffic, which is important in creating a sense of place for drivers. Traffic calming provides ground floor businesses a few moments to entice patrons to visit their establishments. Places that feel safe are inviting to residents and visitors alike.

Placemaking is a complex process with many elements contributing to its success. Layered into the equation, trees add tremendous value by creating beauty and comfort.



## Tactical Intervention on Sterling: Enhance the Wells Fargo Edge

The blank facade of the Wells Fargo building at the corner of Union and Sterling Streets is one of the most prominent facades in all of downtown Morganton. Unfortunately, it is devoid of any architectural detail or color. The building's original facade was architecturally significant and contributed to the downtown streetscape, as noted in the historic photo below.

Chapter 2 of this plan discusses metrics that make downtowns successful, and a continuous frontage is one of them. In the absence of an expensive redesign or renovation of this facade to install doors and windows, there are semi-permanent and less costly solutions to enhance this prominent face in downtown through a phased approach.



**Above (top)** / Existing blank facade of the Wells Fargo building / **Above (bottom)** / Historic image of the Wells Fargo building / Inspiration: Permanent vendor stalls at the Outdoor Artist Market at the Grove Arcade (Asheville, NC) can be rented for a relatively low cost on a quarterly basis. The stalls are co-located adjacent to outdoor cafe seating and both activate the sidewalk.

1. Commission a local artist to install a mural, mosaic or similar art on the large blank wall that is a canvas. This will disguise the unsightly wall and bring more art to downtown.
2. Engage the community to develop artistic crosswalk designs and paint the crosswalks. For more engagement, lead artists can set up a paint by numbers format and children can fill in the appropriate sectors with paint.
3. Work with local designers and fabricators to develop and install outdoor vending stalls that are attractive and durable.
4. Install new street trees and lighting as part of an overall Sterling Street streetscape enhancement project.

## 7.7 RECOMMENDATION

*Improve the aesthetics of the Wells Fargo facade along The Courthouse Square using tactical interventions.*





**Top** / Initial intervention: Painted crosswalks & mural installation on the blank facade  
**Bottom** / Further enhancements: New vendor stalls and street trees

## 7.4 Diversify and Expand Housing

Residents in Morganton are increasingly seeking to live in walkable, urban areas. However, the current supply of urban housing is not sufficient to meet the demand for downtown living. There is very little available housing stock within the downtown district and surrounding neighborhoods, as well as a lack of diverse housing types and price points. Several housing opportunity sites have been identified which could support the development or redevelopment of a range of housing types to better meet the demand in downtown Morganton.

As previously noted in Chapter 5, there is a current assumption that at least 30% of Morganton residents aged 15-34 and 30% of residents aged 50-74 prefer city living, driving demand for downtown housing. The latent demand for housing in downtown Morganton far outweighs the supply, leaving a deficit of 1,029 units. It is anticipated that the demand for downtown housing will continue to grow as major employment opportunities on the horizon are implemented and efforts to enhance downtown retail offerings continue. On page 78, under Section 5.4 Downtown Housing Strategy, specific recommendations are given that include soliciting urban housing developers and partnering with institutions to upgrade the existing housing stock.



**Housing Opportunities** - There are several sites of varying sizes that are suitable or ideal for housing (light green color). A few additional sites are prime for outparcel development that could accommodate housing (blue color). All are well-located and are within a five to 8 minute walk of the core of downtown.

**The total latent demand for downtown housing is 1,868 units – with 720 dwelling units within a 10-minute walk of downtown and 119 units under construction – that leaves a deficit of 1,029 units.**

## LATENT DEMAND FOR HOUSING

	Total Population aged 15-34 (Millennials)	Total Population aged 50-74 (Boomers)
2016 Population	4,532	10,349
% that Prefer Urban Living	30%	30%
Potential Downtown Population	1,360	3,105
Potential Downtown Housing Demand	569	1,299
<b>Total Latent Demand</b>	<b>1,868 (Millennials &amp; Boomers)</b>	

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Online, 2016 Census Data

## PREMIUM FOR DOWNTOWN HOUSING

	City of Morganton Monthly Rent*	Downtown Morganton Monthly Rent	Percent Increase	Summary Downtown Rent/SF
One Bedrooms	530	\$850**	60%	\$12.59
Two Bedrooms	650	\$1,250**	92%	\$10.93
Three Bedrooms	840	\$1,479***	76%	\$8.16

Source:

\*All rental figures for City of Morganton are sourced from "Best Places, National Association of Realtors (2016)

\*\*One bedroom and two bedroom downtown monthly rents are based on figures at Morganton Trading Company (2017)

\*\*\* Three bedroom downtown monthly rent based on figures at King Street Court (2015)

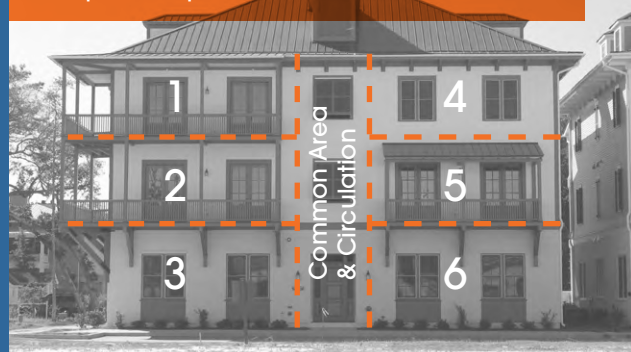
## Multiplexes: Right for downtown Morganton

Multiplex housing is designed to mimic large detached single family buildings, but can house 4 - 6 separate residential units on average. This typology is a great tool for providing residential density that fits in with neighborhood scale and maintains a small town feel. Buildings of this type can be constructed on smaller parcels where larger apartment buildings are not feasible.

Low Country style multiplex near Beaufort, SC



Sample multiplex unit breakdown, 6 units



## Residents Activate Downtowns

What makes a downtown thrive? In short, it is the presence of people — people working, people shopping, people relaxing, and people eating — that is the secret sauce to a truly successful downtown. In downtown Morganton, there is a need for more people living downtown. Realistic opportunities have been identified for hundreds of new residents to live within a 5-8 minute walk of The Courthouse Square. Residents activate the streets in the areas where they live throughout the day and into the evening. They walk around their neighborhood, populating the street and attracting others to do the same.

## Urban Housing Premium

There is currently a significant premium for downtown housing. Downtown residential rents are higher than surrounding neighborhoods by 60 - 92%. This premium on urban housing values coupled with the latent demand is a sign that the supply of downtown housing needs to increase. This reality along with a targeted marketing campaign will attract housing to downtown Morganton.

Similar effort should be put into telling the story of downtown Morganton's promise as a residential neighborhood. Focus should be directed toward the variety of walkable amenities that downtown offers including the cinemas, local organic grocery,

various breweries and bottle shops, restaurants, coffee shops and unique retail offerings. The Kimbrell's building at the corner of King and Union is presented as an example for expanding urban housing in downtown Morganton.

## 7.8 RECOMMENDATION

*Market downtown as a residential neighborhood with a variety of walkable amenities to both builders and potential buyers.*



Existing Kimbrell's building at the corner of Union and King Streets is ripe for redevelopment. It is well-located and prime for residential dwellings with ground floor retail. Details can be found on pages 153 - 154.



Artist's rendering of a potential redevelopment of the Kimbrell's building site showing a four story residential building with ground floor retail.



## 7.9 RECOMMENDATION

*Prioritize housing opportunities in the Flatiron District, the area around City Hall, and the block containing Oak Hill Ironworks.*

### Housing Opportunities in the Flatiron District

The area on the northwest edge of downtown is affectionately called the Flatiron District due to the unique shape of the building at the corner of Green and Sterling Streets currently occupied by Fonta Flora Brewery. The "district" contains the triangular block bordered by N. Green Street, N. Sterling Street and Collett Street along with immediately adjacent blocks.

In recent years, new businesses appealing to millennials have opened in this district and are adding to the vibrancy of the area. Fonta Flora Brewery has become one of the most notable craft beer producers on the east coast, not because of volume, rather for their quality and unique recipes. It has emerged as a major neighborhood hang out spot in downtown. During this planning process, Overmountain Cycles bike shop opened and has added to the positive energy and interest in the area. There is also a bottle shop and home brew supply store in planning for the block.

In unison with the entrepreneurial growth here, development interest has also risen. Current plans include a hotel development on the vacant lot at the corner of N. Green

Street and Fleming Place across from Fonta Flora Brewery. Additionally, there are other vacant or underutilized parcels for sale at this time that are prime housing opportunity sites.



**Top** / Housing opportunity sites near the Flatiron District (indicated in yellow)

**Bottom** / Various housing typologies are possible for this part of downtown (page 149 in Chapter 8 has more details about this development)





**Top**, left to right / The flatiron style building that gives the district its name and houses Fonta Flora Brewery / Tap room at Fonta Flora is a neighborhood amenity

**Middle**, left to right / Vacant and underutilized land across Green Street from Fonta Flora / Vacant land for sale across Sterling Street from these businesses is ripe for redevelopment into new urban residential uses

**Bottom** / Evidence of continued investment in this area (Overmountain Cycle)



## City Hall Area Housing Opportunities

This area is located adjacent to City Hall and the Morganton Trading Company, about a 5 minute walk to The Courthouse Square, and is primarily bordered by E. Union Street, Church Street, E. Meeting Street and Bouchelle Street. Existing townhomes are located at the corner of E. Union and Church Streets, but several vacant parcels dominate the area and have been identified as prime housing opportunity sites. A few mixed use buildings in the immediate vicinity offer amenities including a deli, a salon, a restaurant, an art studio and gallery, a drug store, and an organic food market within one block.

These blocks are bordered on the north and east by established neighborhoods, some with architecturally significant early 1900s homes.



**Above**, left to right / Central plaza and restaurant with outdoor dining at City Hall / Several vacant parcels along E. Meeting Street are prime opportunities for new urban housing

**Below** / A mixed use building at Union Square contains a deli, some small offices and residential units on the second floor / Unique, architecturally significant early 1900s era homes in surrounding neighborhoods





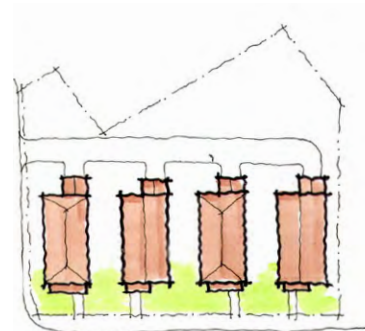
**Above**, Left to right / Housing opportunity sites (indicated in yellow) / One design solution for the blocks adjacent to the Morganton Trading Company

## Small Site Residential Density Study - Union Street

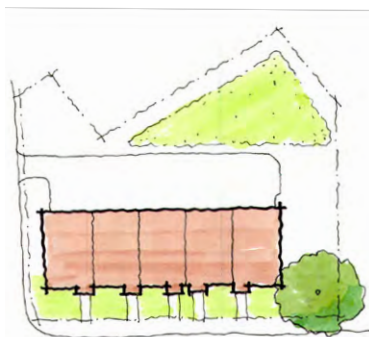
Density can be achieved in urban areas through creative site planning. This site on Union Street currently contains 2 single family lots. These parcels can accommodate several units in a variety of ways that maintain the neighborhood scale appropriate for the periphery of downtown Morganton.



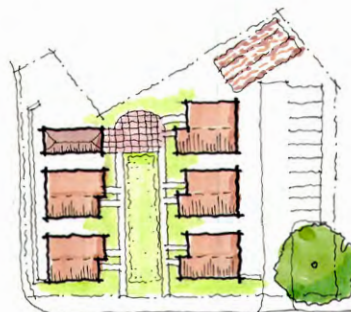
Existing site



Compact Single Family: 4 units



Townhouses: 5 units



Cottage Court Duplexes:  
5 - 10 units



Cottage Duplexes: 5 - 10 units

## Infill Housing near Oak Hill Ironworks

This block and a few parcels along S. Sterling Street offer interesting opportunities for boutique infill housing opportunities compared to the previously discussed areas, which had large vacant tracts. Situated only one block from the core downtown retail area and The Courthouse Square, these housing opportunity sites are some of the most well-located in downtown.

During this planning process, Oak Hill Ironworks opened a downtown retail location along the King Street edge

of this block. Although, not a food and entertainment use, this establishment has already generated additional buzz and energy in this portion of downtown, perhaps due in part to their unique handcrafted products and established reputation.

The commercial and mixed use buildings along the Union and Sterling Street edges require parking, but not to the extent that is currently supplied on this block. So, some of this parking can be utilized for infill housing along the King and Meeting Street frontages, which will give the

block a more complete built edge and further enhance this portion of downtown.

The scarcity of available land presents opportunities to be creative with the design and development of new housing products. For example, as noted in the diagram below, a small row of units could fit in the alley to the west of Oak Hill Ironworks. Lacking frontage on a principle street, these units should be marketed as artist studios or live/work units. Very little parking would be required and the alley loaded design would appeal to an array of creative entrepreneurs.



**Above**, left to right / Recently opened downtown retail shop of Oak Hill Ironworks / The highly creative hand made wares make the interior of Oak Hill Ironworks very interesting and attractive **Below**, left to right / Housing opportunities near Oak Hill Ironworks (indicated in yellow) / Creative, boutique infill housing will complete the block



## 7.5 Connect to the Community

Downtown is the intersection of the community. Tourists coming to the area to experience Nature’s Playground need to be drawn to Downtown Morganton. Residents and visitors alike need choices to safely and enjoyably move around the downtown area. Gateways into Downtown Morganton should be highlighted and celebrated as they are the front porch of the community, the first thing that visitors see as they come into downtown.

### Access to Amenities by Foot or Bike

Convenient access into downtown Morganton by bike is critical. Neighborhoods, regional recreational amenities, and institutional campuses are all within a 10 minute bike ride of downtown. In order for people to choose to ride a bike into downtown from these areas, the ride must be convenient, safe and attractive. The diagram below shows recommended improvements to bike and pedestrian mobility.

### Biking and Walking in Downtown

Walking and biking audit results of the downtown area can be found in Section 4.3. Overall, participants reported that walking and biking is very comfortable and enjoyable within one or two blocks of The Courthouse Square, but quickly becomes less so as one ventures away from the core. Vehicular speeds and noise increase, and cars behave more aggressively.

## Existing Conditions



### 7.10 RECOMMENDATION

*Prioritize overall community mobility and enhance all downtown gateways.*

Conceptual rendering of the proposed cycle track on East Meeting Street at The Courthouse Square. Also shown is proposed reverse angle parking that abuts the square. Armadillos are proposed to serve as protection for cyclists from adjacent travel lanes versus a concrete barrier. Armadillos are mountable by emergency vehicles and allow stormwater to flow across the pavement, but they’re large enough to create a gentle bump that reminds motorists to steer away from the cycle track if they get too close.



## Proposed Improvements

Connectivity and mobility around downtown



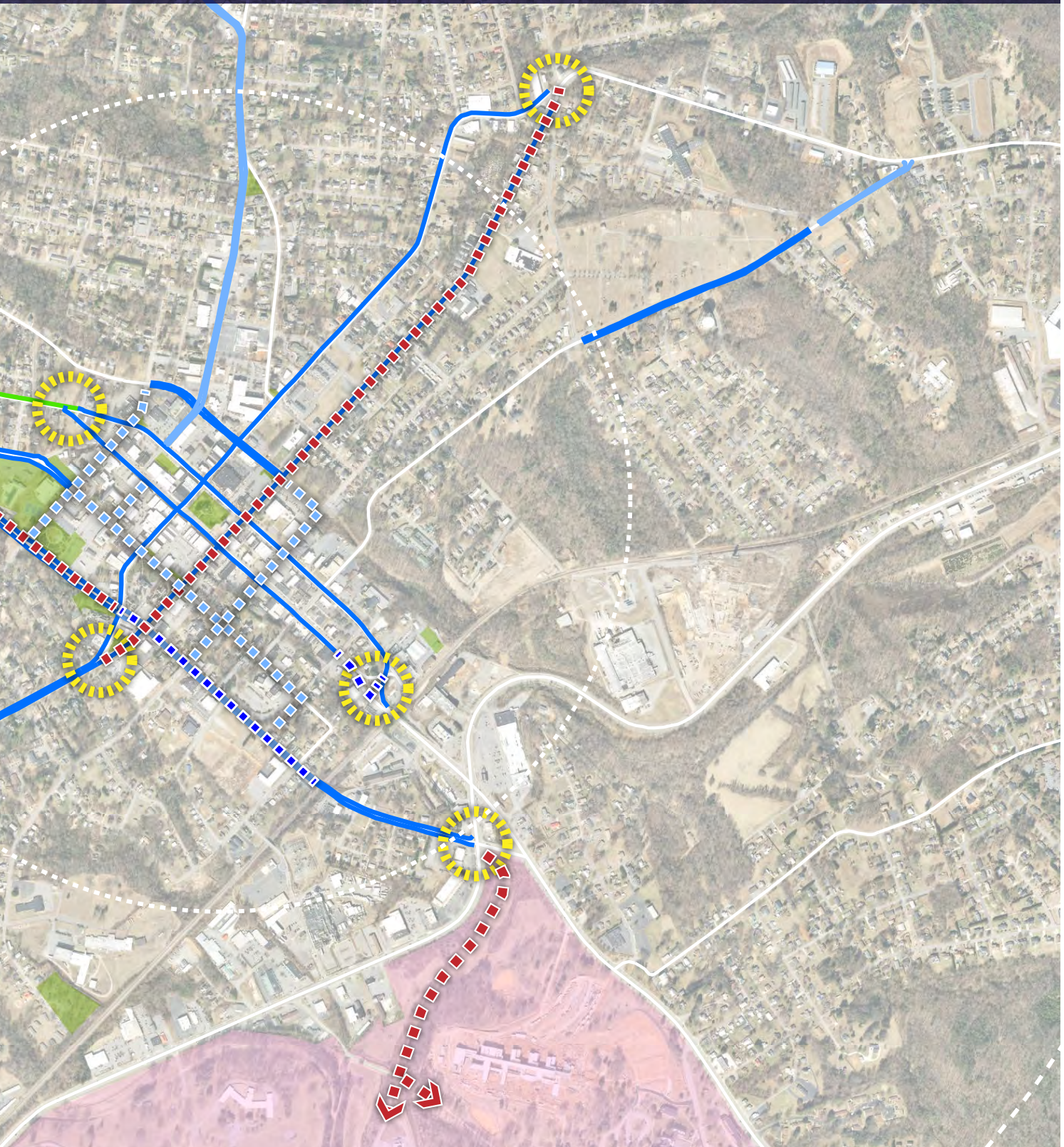
**LEGEND**

- Cycle Track
- New Bike Lanes
- Existing Bike Lanes

- New Shared Bike Lanes
- Existing Shared Bike Lanes
- New Greenway

- Existing Greenway
- Parks & Open Space
- Institutional Campuses

- ⊙ Improved Intersections
- ⊖ 5-10 minute Biking Radii



## The Sterling Rail Bridge

The rail bridge passing over Sterling Street is part of one of the most traversed gateways into downtown. An average of 10,000 vehicles pass under this bridge daily, so it is a critical element connecting downtown with areas to the east.

Gateways are part of the first impression of downtown. The area currently appears unsafe to cross under as a pedestrian making it a barrier to connectivity.

Welcoming signage will enhance this threshold. If signage attached to the bridge is not possible, the same effect can be achieved through projected lighting or even paint. Many communities have implemented a wide range of artistic elements to brighten underpasses during the day and night. LED lighting has become

one of the most popular tools to achieve artistic under-bridge lighting effects.

With conversion to two-way circulation, a reallocation of the existing asphalt will be necessary. This includes one travel lane in each direction once you cross under the bridge with a right only lane available for those turning on Green Street. Other streetscape enhancements in this area should

include a wider sidewalk, street trees and landscaping.

### 7.11 RECOMMENDATION

*Investigate opportunities to enhance the Sterling Street rail underpass and improve this key gateway.*



**Existing Conditions**

## Proposed Improvements-Daytime







**Top**, left and right / Underpass lighting project (Birmingham, AL)  
**Bottom**, left to right / Underpass enhancement project, daytime view (San Jose, CA) / Underpass enhancement project, night view (San Jose, CA)

## Proposed Improvements-Nighttime



### College Street as Multimodal Connector

College Street is a key connection between the east and west sides of downtown. The section west of the Union Street intersection is unnecessarily four lanes wide. Traffic volumes can be accommodated with one travel lane in each direction. The entire length of College Street has wide lanes that can be reallocated as part of a multi-modal transformation. The existing curb

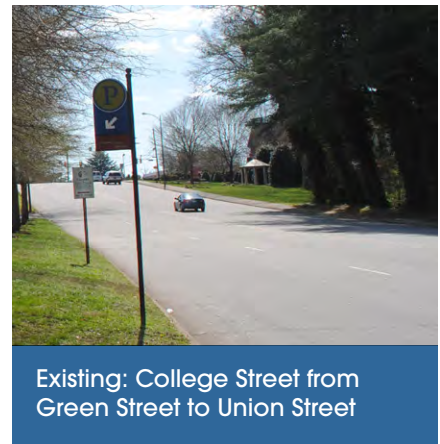
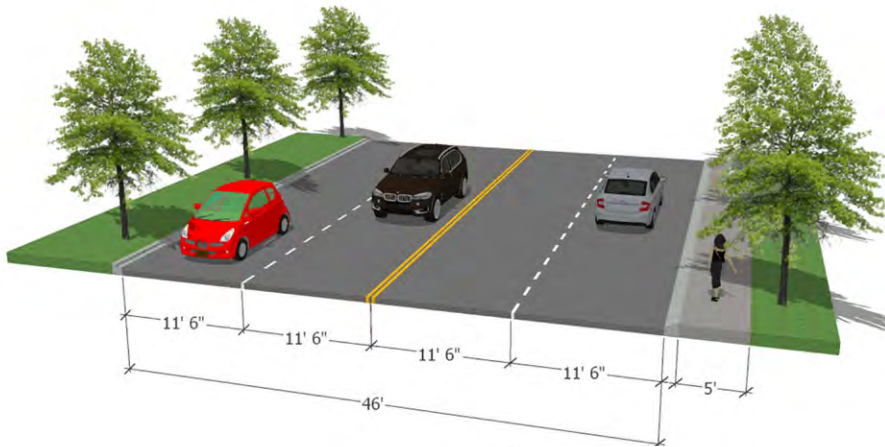
and gutter can remain largely unaltered, saving costs.

The diagram on page 123 illustrates the overall mobility strategy proposed in this plan. College Street is poised to be a key link between Catawba Meadows plus the greenway to the west of downtown and the institutional campus district to the east of downtown. The proposed multimodal enhancements are as follows:

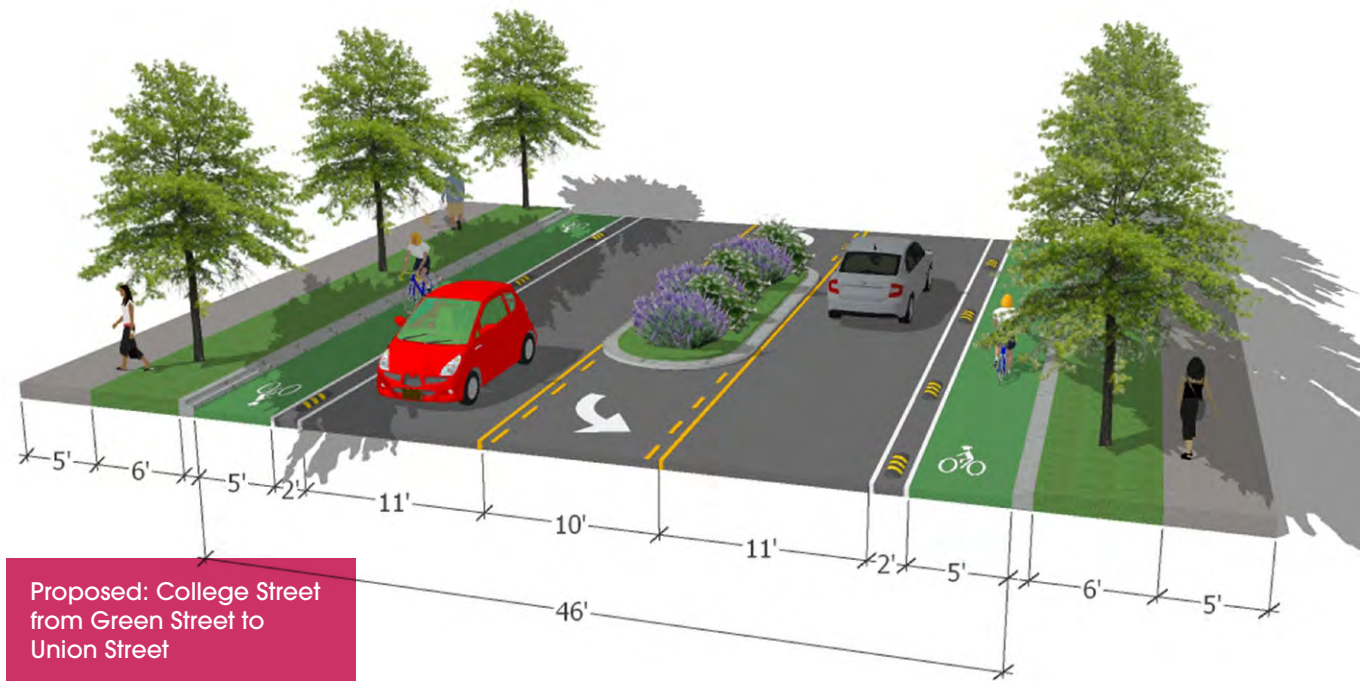
**College Street from N. Green Street to S. Union Street,** currently a four lane divided street, is proposed to be reduced to a two lane street with a center turn lane/planted spot median configuration with protected bike lanes.

- Armadillos are proposed for use as the protective element, as they are safe for emergency vehicles to mount, but deter the average vehicle from crossing.

Existing: College Street from Green Street to Union Street



Existing: College Street from Green Street to Union Street



Proposed: College Street from Green Street to Union Street

- Alterations to existing sidewalk segments are likely, as they are located at the back of curb in many areas. The preferred design is to buffer the sidewalk from travel lanes with a planting strip and street trees, which is safer and more comfortable for pedestrians.
- Bicycle connectivity to the downtown core from College Street is proposed via a cycle track heading north from the Union Street intersection along E. Meeting Street.

**College Street east of the Union Street intersection** is a more narrow street section and is generally two lanes.

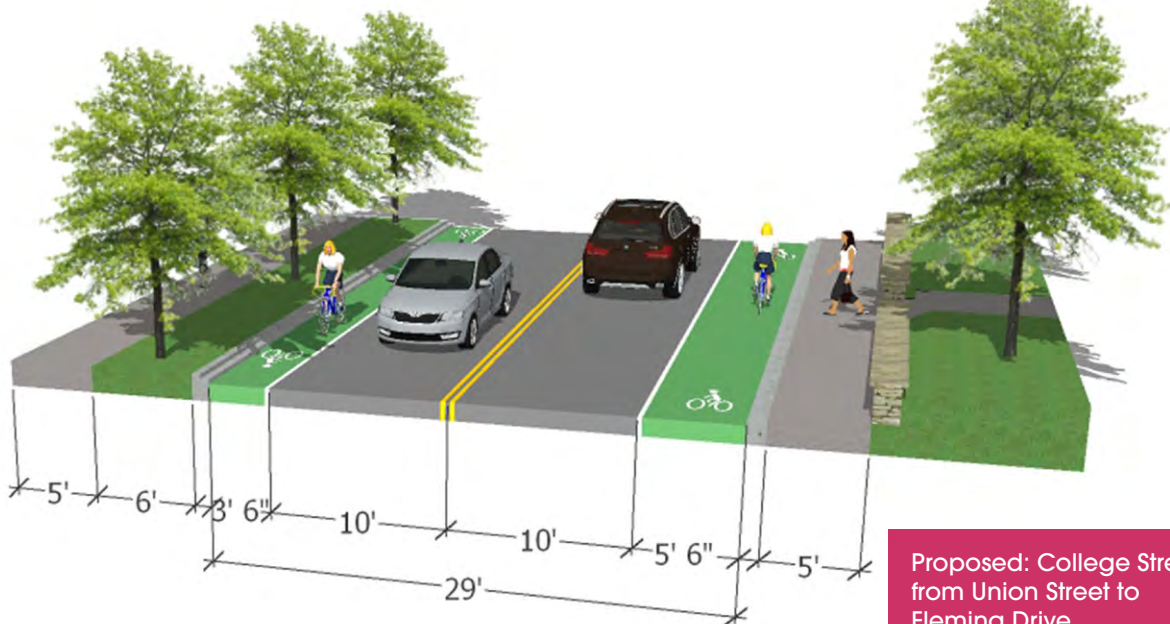
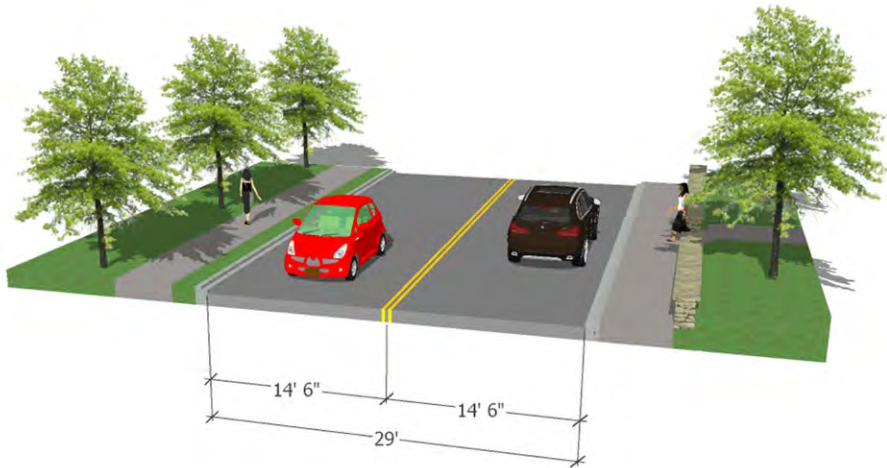
- The lanes are uncommonly wide and can be reduced in width to accommodate the addition of bike lanes in either direction outside of the travel lanes. Narrowing the travel lanes will calm traffic speeds in this section.
- New bike lanes will connect cyclists to the institutional/

campus district to the southeast. Bike lanes will stop at the intersection with Fleming Drive, but cyclists and pedestrians can cross Fleming at a proposed enhanced intersection, then access a proposed multi-use path/cycle track running generally along the Hunting Creek alignment on the Broughton campus property.

**7.12 RECOMMENDATION**

*Transform College Street into a multi-modal connector by reducing travel lanes, adding cycling facilities, and beautifying the corridor with street trees.*

Existing: College Street from Union Street to Fleming Drive



Proposed: College Street from Union Street to Fleming Drive

## 7.6 Embed Art into Everything

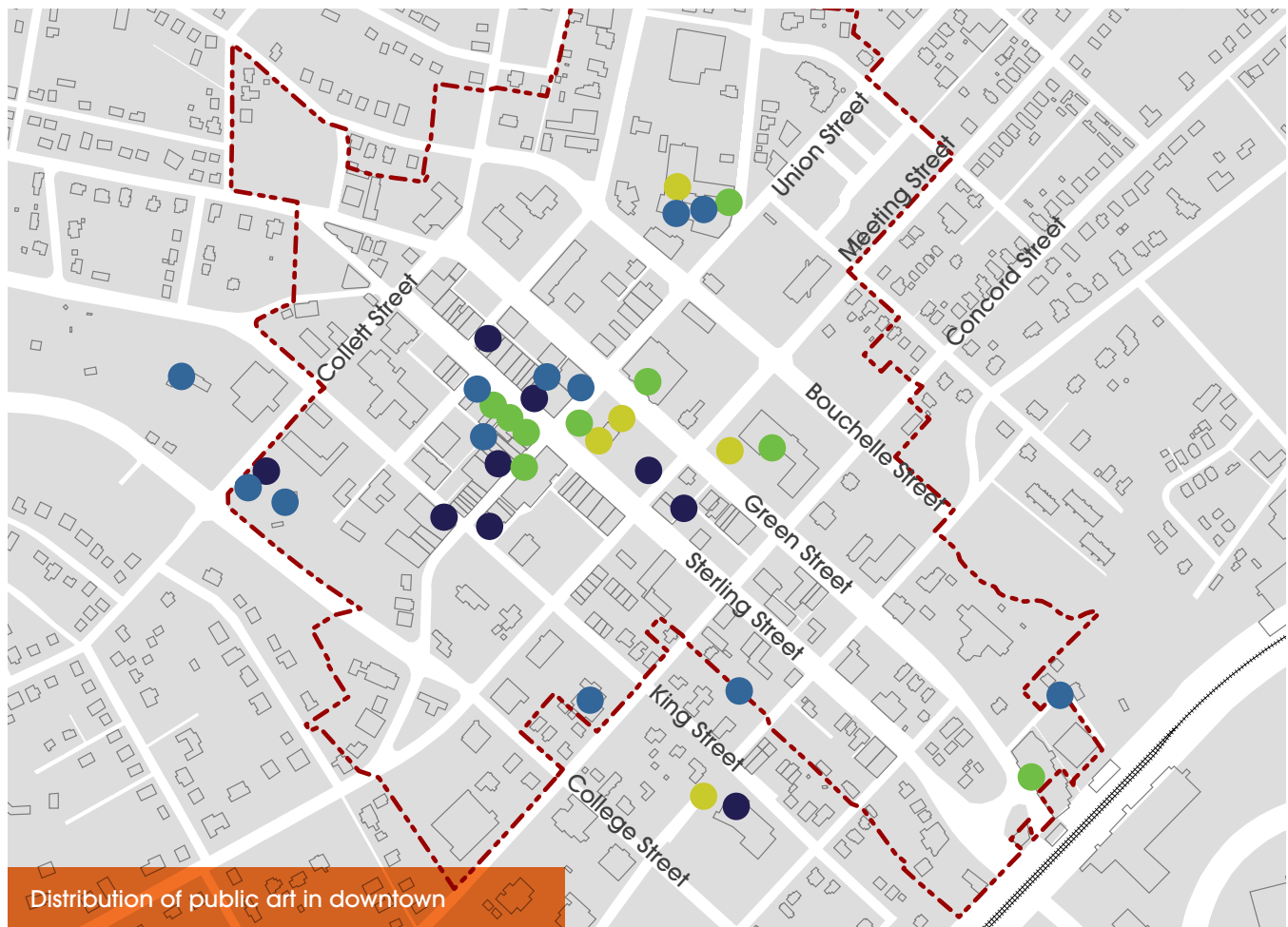
The art scene in Morganton is extremely active and constantly growing. The future identity of downtown should be expressed through the local artists by embedding art into as many public and private spaces as possible. The current art in downtown should be emphasized and coordinated with future projects through a public art action plan. See Chapter 6 for more detailed recommendations aimed at embedding art into everything.

The diagram below illustrates the impressive distribution of public art in downtown today. Opportunities still exist for more permanent art in downtown; however, spontaneous art should also have a home here. The artists in Morganton can lead the implementation of pop up art projects. In many communities, public officials are supportive of such ad hoc elements, but artists and citizens may still be hesitant. Increased communication channels between artist groups and city officials will be key to creating a common understanding. The

key is capitalizing on the creative population who have ideas of how to improve the area with specific projects.

### 7.13 RECOMMENDATION

*Adopt a public art action plan based on the 30+ specific recommendations in Chapter 6.*



#### LEGEND

- Benches
- Historic
- Murals & Mosaics
- Other art



**Top**, left to right / Gregory Jewels mural with Iron Gateway in the foreground in the alley off N. Sterling Street / Film Reel bench in front of Marquee Cinemas on S. Green Street

**Middle**, left to right / Typical hand crafted downtown waste bucket enclosure by Oak Hill Ironworks / Mimosa Kaleidoscope metal sculpture off N. Sterling Street

**Bottom** / Mural behind Wisteria in the alley off of S. Green Street



## 7.7 Have Fun and Experiment

Not every addition or improvement to downtown needs to be permanent. There are plenty of ways to improve the city with a few funky ideas and a little imagination. The city should engage the creative minds and key entrepreneurs to experiment with multiple, cheap ideas for improving downtown before investing in final solutions. Potential ideas are found on the following pages.

### 7.14 RECOMMENDATION

*Embrace experimental projects that are low cost yet high impact.*



Existing Conditions

#### Sterling Streetscape

The building face to building face width on N. Sterling Street is currently much wider than the ideal ratio for spatial enclosure. This can contribute to an unsteady feeling for pedestrians. The sidewalk zone can be enhanced by extending the ground floor businesses into the space with sale racks. Additional activation can be achieved with movable seating, umbrellas, interesting awnings, and signage.



Existing Conditions





**Proposed Improvements**

**Burke County Arts Council**

This building along S. Sterling Street is only steps from The Courthouse Square but is not contributing to downtown's vibrancy. The rendering below shows the potential for the Burke County Arts Council to occupy the building and allow artistic expression to pour out of the space. The image shows terraced wooden stairs leading to a viewing deck of the surrounding mountains or of downtown itself. It could also house experimental art exhibits including student work.

**Proposed Improvements**

1. Local art
2. Artist studios
3. Community garden
4. Student project/outdoor exhibit
5. Can of paint
6. Pressure wash
7. Infill development



### N. Sterling Street Alley

The alley off of N. Sterling Street, beside My Local Bakery, provides a public space and urban connector that could use a little creativity. It is currently uninviting with minimal improvements (brick pavers and metal work). A few suggestions to create a friendlier environment include installing a creative art piece overhead, perhaps adding decorative dragons, and/or the walls of this alley can become a rotating outdoor art gallery for certain media.

### Existing Conditions

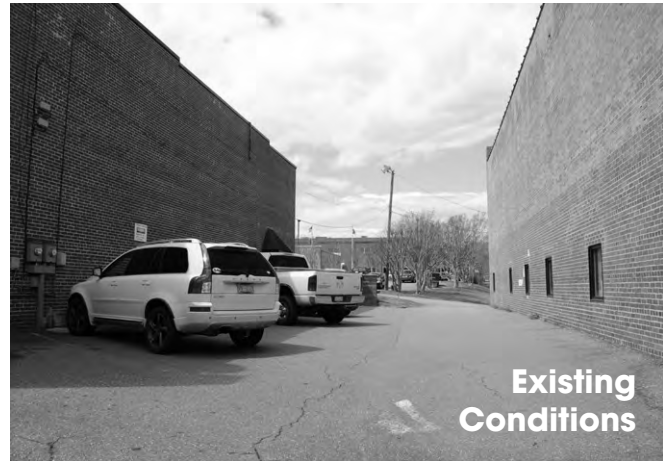


### Proposed Improvements



### E. Union Street Alley

The alley off of E. Union Street, across from the Marquee Cinemas, provides an important connection between off-street parking and activities in the core. With a few abandoned buildings and vacant lots, the area behind the main building is misused by vagrants and vandals. In order to enliven the alleys and other connection points to the block, the city and/or private property owners should enhance the blank walls with murals and decorative wayfinding signage. Another way to improve the perceived safety and encourage positive activity is the addition of string lights.



### Proposed Improvements

### Wells Fargo Rear Facade

On page 111, the Wells Fargo building is called out for its blank wall fronting on the square. The starkness extends around the entire building. The mural motif from the Sterling Street facade should wrap around the alley side of the building as well. This would face a proposed plaza that continues the enhanced alley along artist live/work units. This facade is also highly visible from The Courthouse Square, the heart of downtown activity.



### Proposed Improvements

### CoMMA Fly Loft Facade

Performance venues often have large spans of blank walls due to their interior programming requirements. CoMMA's fly loft can be seen from a great distance. This creates an opportunity to enhance the large walls with murals. Due to the mass, a traditional mural would be costly and time consuming. The cubic volume and grand heights could be masked in faux, painted windows to resemble a traditional building.

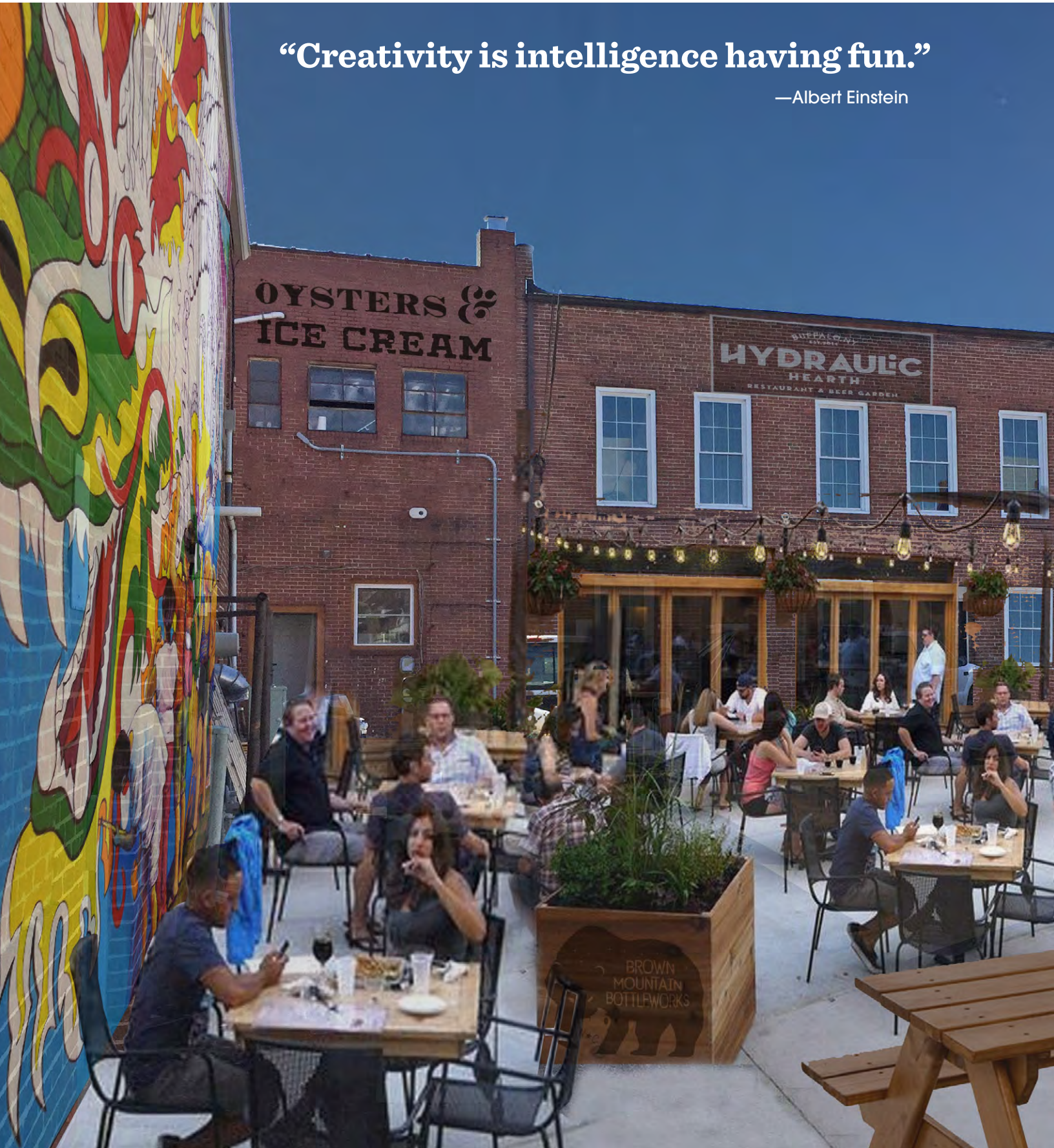
### Existing Conditions



### Proposed Improvements

**“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”**

—Albert Einstein

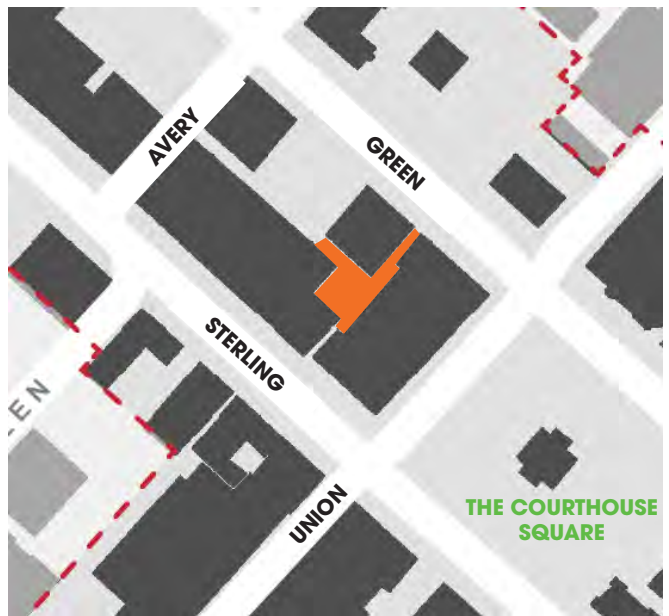




### Brown Mountain Bottleworks Alley

The alley off of Sterling Street is public property and has typically been used for parking and trash bins. However, small areas are being transformed by adjacent businesses like Brown Mountain Bottleworks, which has installed a rear patio. The city should expand on this bubbling energy and take over the entire alley space and turn it into an intimate urban plaza. This recommendation is explored in more detail as a "Top 10 in 5 Project" on page 188.

### Existing Conditions



Alley off Sterling Street

### Proposed Improvements

### Improve City Hall Plaza

The plaza at City Hall and the Morganton Trading Company is underutilized. The space is surrounded by a mix of uses, which should provide a variety of potential patrons to fill the space throughout the day and evening. Office workers could sit and enjoy a morning coffee or a lunchtime meal, while tenants of residential units may inhabit the space in the evening. It is surrounded by historic, interesting architecture and its proportions are comfortable and intimate. The space needs additional comfort elements such as benches and string lights to create a warm and safe atmosphere. Additionally, colorful plantings and art elements will add energy to the space.



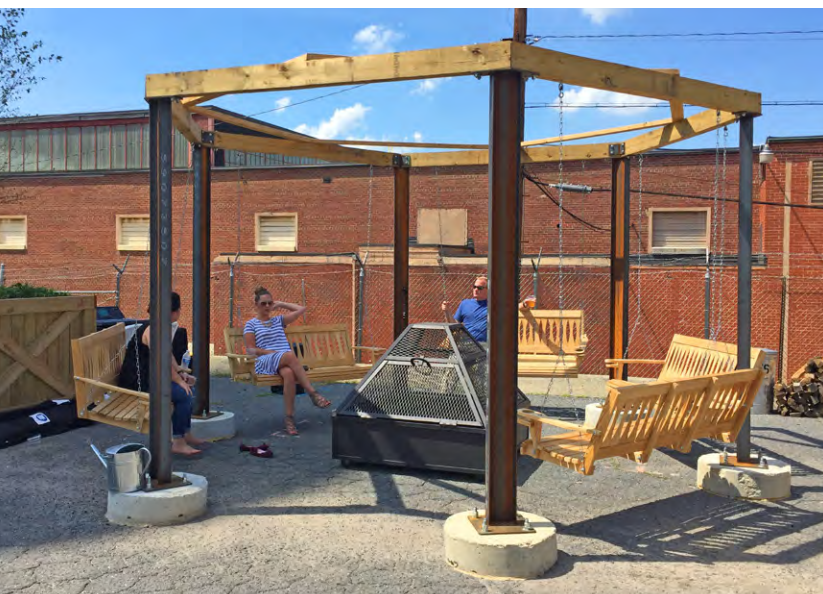
Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements



**Other Temporary Activation Ideas** **Left** / Mural on a pathway or sidewalk / **Above** / Temporary public space in a parking spot / **Middle**, left to right / Fun treatment to storefront windows / Asphalt turned into a plaza with paint and bollards **Bottom**, left to right / Fabricated fire pit and swings / Movable lounge seating made from reclaimed material



## Activate a Vacant Lot

Catawba Brewing has helped to generate so much activity in downtown Morganton. Not only is it an economic engine, but the establishment is the site of several events and activities, large and small. But, downtown should capitalize on this magnet for activity more than it currently does.

A vacant lot adjacent to the brewery at the north corner of S. Sterling Street and W. Concord Street occupies half a block of prime Sterling Street frontage and sits only half a block from The Courthouse Square. To say that it has potential is an understatement. This is a perfect location to stage occasional temporary events, like a food truck rally which pairs well with craft beer. Events that coordinate with the brewery's current activities and attractions would be especially successful. Such examples are low cost, temporary and relatively uncomplicated to organize and stage, but they have great potential to draw interest to an underutilized, but very centrally located and important property in downtown.

Taking a more permanent step toward enhancing this part of downtown, public entities could improve the intersection for pedestrians by installing high visibility crosswalks. Given the proximity to the brewery, a hops pattern could be used in the crosswalk to inject more art into the public realm and create a unique identity for this intersection.

Looking further down the road, the lot is a prime parcel on which Catawba Brewing can expand their operations. The intersection enhancements have been extended beyond improved crosswalks and traffic signals have been installed on mast arms, which allows for the removal of many unsightly wires above the public realm.



**Existing Conditions**





**Proposed Improvements - Phase 1**



**Proposed Improvements - Phase 2**



SPEED  
LIMIT  
25



# 8

## Development & Redevelopment Opportunities

Development Opportunity Analysis

Development Overview

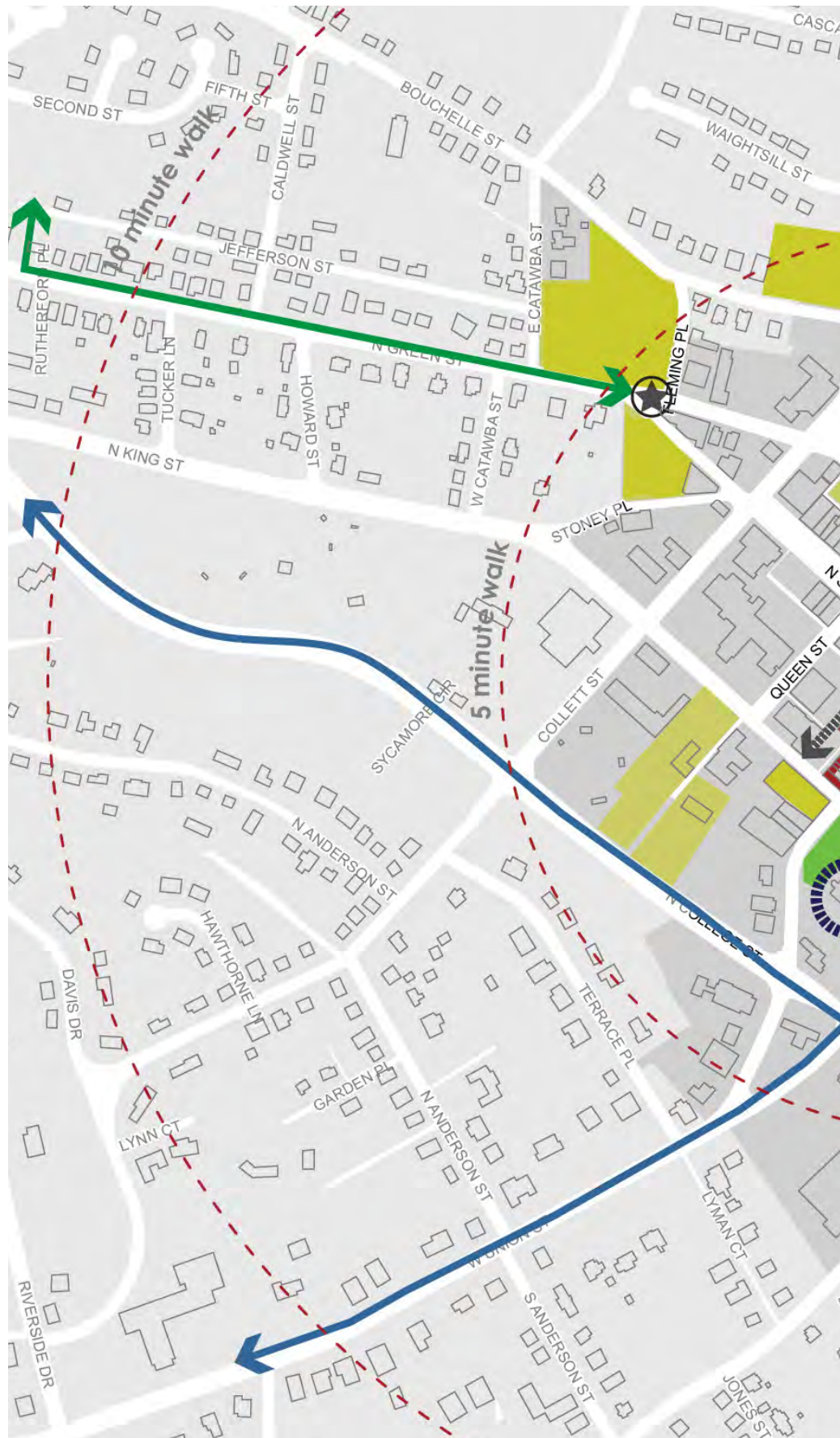
Opportunity Areas

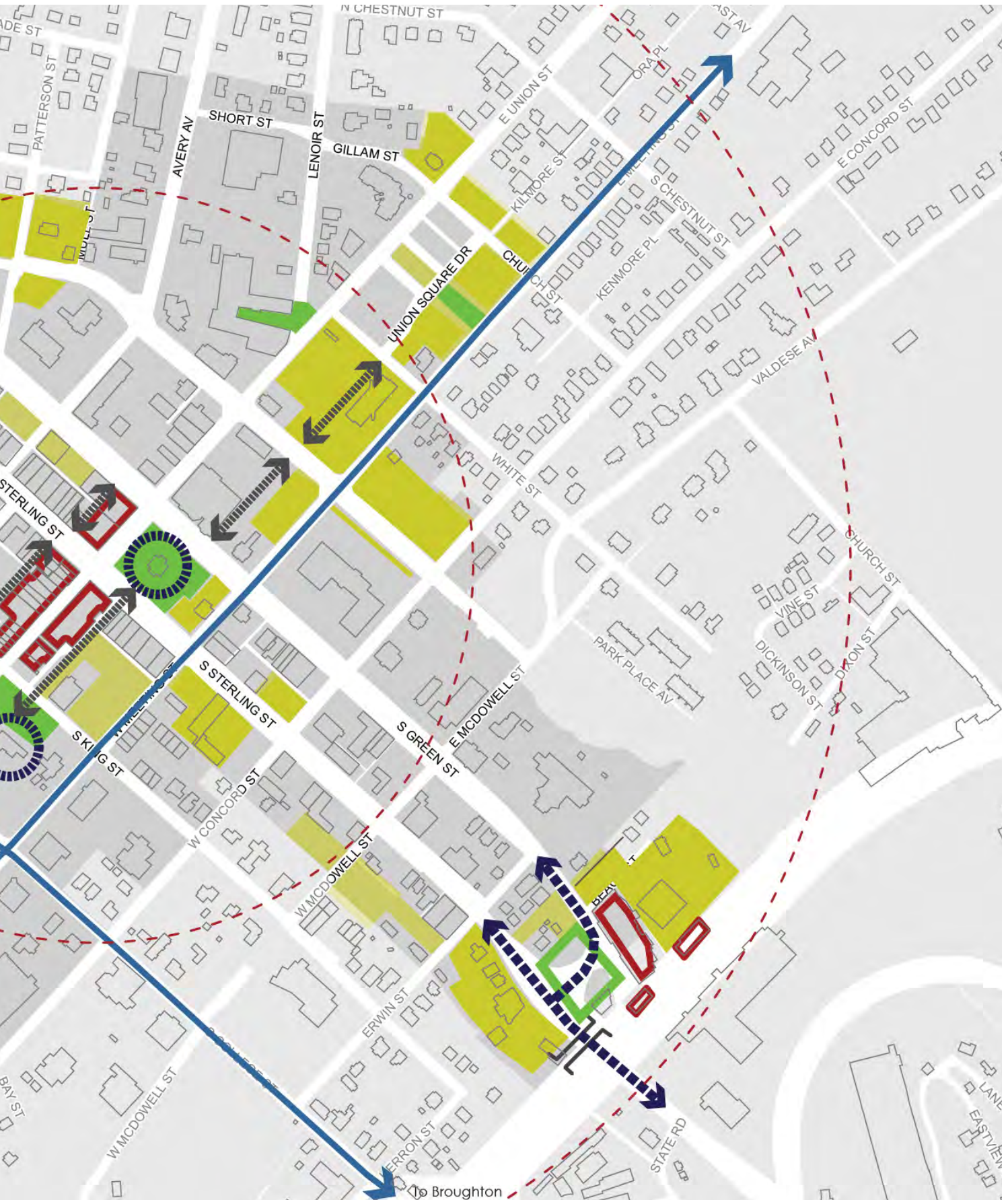
## 8.1 Development Opportunity Analysis

A survey of downtown Morganton was conducted to find opportunities for potential development and redevelopment. These areas included: empty lots, vacant buildings, parking lots, and outparcel opportunities, especially properties owned by the county or city. When multiple parcels were identified in close proximity to one another, for example, around an intersection, new development, or an employment center (i.e. City Hall), the areas became design districts warranting further study. The re-introduction of two-way operations in downtown also impacted the design of some areas. The core is mostly built-out, but some opportunities for infill are available. The other, larger opportunities are found on the following pages.

### LEGEND

-  Development opportunities
-  Enhance existing
-  Enhance public space
-  Alley connections
-  Improve bike facilities
-  Existing greenway
-  New road alignment
-  Iconic landmarks
-  Special design condition
-  5 - 10 min walk radii





## 8.2 Development Overview

After the analysis, the following areas were identified for detailed concept designs:

- » **Flat Iron District:** Area around Fonta Flora, the adjacent vacant parcel, and the re-designed intersection of N. Sterling and N. Green Streets
- » **Kimbrell's Site:** Vacant building at the corner of W. Union and N. King Streets
- » **Union Square:** Area around the adaptive mill reuse, Morganton Trading Company
- » **South Depot:** Area around Morganton Station, the old depot, and re-designed intersection of S. Sterling and S. Green Streets
- » **Oak Hill Iron Block:** Block including Oak Hill Ironworks

For all of these areas, multiple iterations were designed during the conceptual process and a few are still presented with two options. If the densest options for each area was chosen, the overall development plan would yield the following totals:

- » 90 room hotel
- » 274 apartments (add South Depot #s)
- » 34 townhomes (add South Depot #s)
- » 12,000 square feet of commercial space (add SD #s)
- » 8 artist live/work units
- » 2 (6 plex) urban mansions (12 units)
- » 10 cottage (court) duplex units

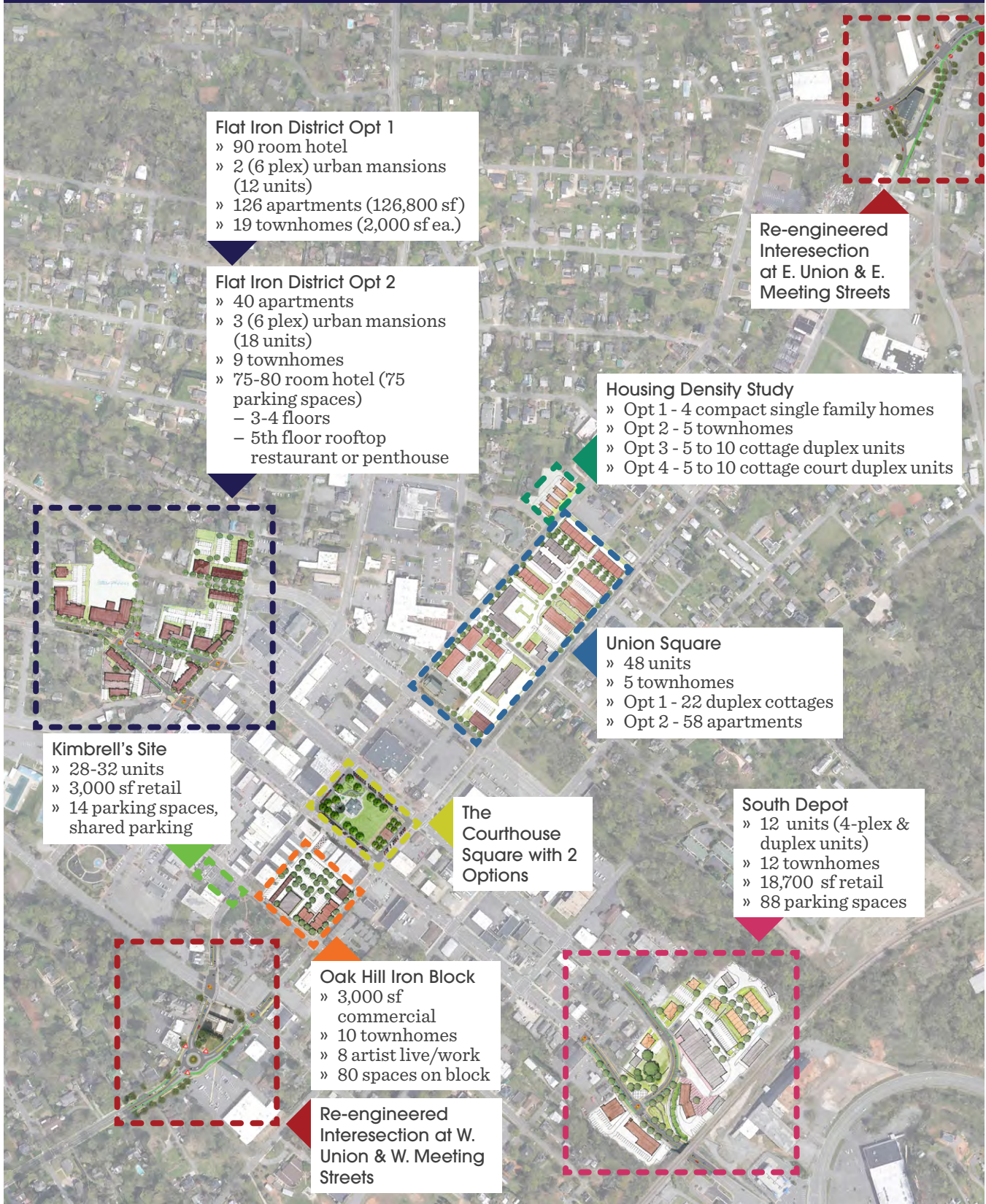
The hotel and urban mansions are located in the Flat Iron District, the artist live/work units are in the Oak Hill Iron Block, and the cottage duplexes are part of a housing density study on Union Street.



Precedent Imagery, top to bottom / Boutique hotel (Vientiane, Laos Source: Booking.com) / Urban townhomes (Calgary, Alberta, Canada) / Inside & outside of artist studios (San Francisco, CA, Source: Kennerly Architecture & Planning)



**Overall Development Opportunities Map** | This map compiles the proposed master plans for development opportunities detailed on the following pages, as well as, identifies the two one-way pair intersection conversions where no redevelopment is currently proposed (at either end of Union and Meeting Streets).



## 8.3 Opportunity Areas

### Flat Iron District | Option 1

Many factors contribute to this area's designation as a redevelopment opportunity. First, Fonta Flora serves as a regional destination with their innovative craft beers. Second, the large vacant tract of land bounded by N. Green, E. Catawba, Bouchelle Streets and Fleming Place is under consideration for a new hotel and smaller vacant lots on the north side of Bouchelle Street are ideal for a small-scale housing development. The recommendations in this vision plan also create other unique opportunities, including terminating vistas associated with the re-engineering of one-way streets back to two-way operation. These occur at the intersection of Sterling and Collete Streets, as well as, Fleming Place and Green Street. The first intersection's proposed development includes a row of elegant townhomes

with a grander, mixed-use unit on the end facing out onto Sterling Street. (page 101 reviews the history of this vista) At the second intersection, the proposed development is a new hotel, which has a restaurant component on the ground floor with outdoor dining. One important design concept illustrated in this option is the placement of parking lots, especially for the hotel. Parking should be buffered on as many sides as possible with trees and/or new development to protect the existing neighborhood from unsightly views into parking lots. These developments should also line the major streets to create a sense of enclosure and enhance the pedestrian experience with a continuous frontage.

### 8.1 RECOMMENDATION

*Expand housing options in the Flat Iron District and pursue the development of a hotel in the area.*



Proposed Master Plan of the Flat Iron District Option 1



## Flat Iron District | Option 2

While a hotel is needed in Downtown Morganton, the best location for it is highly debated. Throughout the design process, citizens expressed hopes to locate a hotel more prominently in the downtown, including the location shown in this option at the corner of Patterson and N. Green Streets. The existing bank located there is dated and considered a redevelopment opportunity. This parcel of land lies at the end of an existing terminating vista along Green Street and a hotel could serve as an iconic building, adding to the overall character of downtown.

This option has smaller development totals in almost every aspect compared to option one. The proposed hotel would be smaller and the master plan includes

less apartments and townhomes, only the number of urban mansion units increase. However, the location of the hotel is more in line with the existing urban context since larger commercial buildings are currently along Collette and Patterson Streets. Also, the current vacant lot is illustrated with a variety of housing options that fit into the existing neighborhood context.

The housing opportunities shown in both options include: infill townhomes for the triangular block shared with Fonta Flora, terraced apartment units along the steep incline on the opposite triangular block, and a mix of housing types on other vacant lots on the north side of Bouchelle Street. The priority in both options for this district is to give the hotel a closer look and provide a wide range of housing types.



Proposed Master Plan of the Flat Iron District Option 2



### **Flat Iron District**

Bird's eye illustration of Option 1 with the hotel at the redesigned Green and Sterling Street intersection. The amount of enhanced public space is obvious in this rendering: rooftop terraces on townhomes and Fonta Flora, a beer garden along Sterling Street, and a corner plaza at the hotel.



## Kimbrell's Site

The property owner of the old Kimbrell's site was a willing and interested participant in the planning process. The owner allowed our team to investigate redevelopment opportunities on the site. With the wonderful views apparent from other rooftop terraces around town, the team knew a vertical development would be ideal.

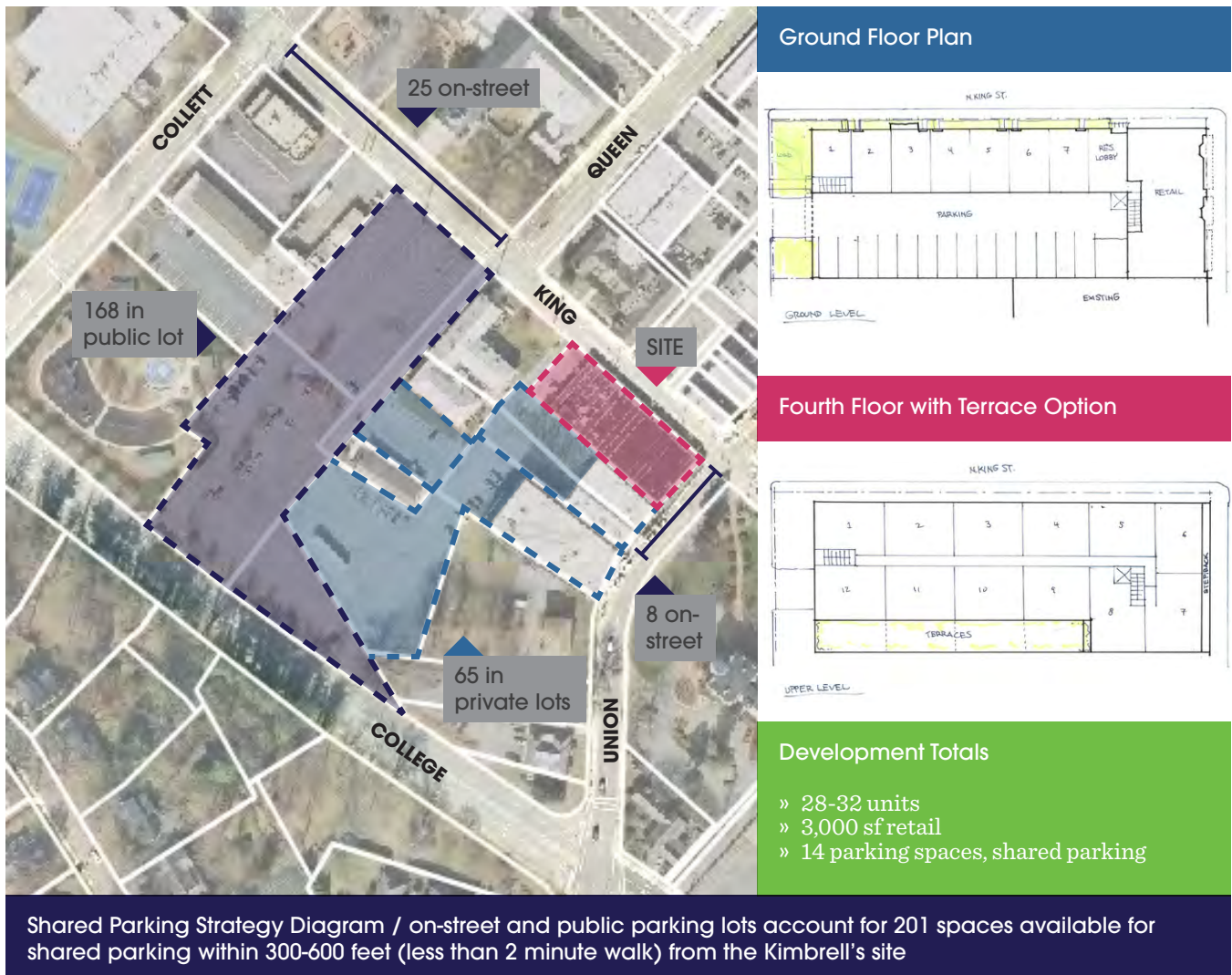
When considering a three-to-four story apartment building, a key factor to consider is parking. The site is limited, and as a general rule of thumb for small downtowns, allowing 1 to 2 parking spaces per unit is preferred. The solution to resolve this issue is to develop a shared parking strategy. The site shares a block with one of the largest and least utilized public parking lots in downtown—the lot associated with Martha's Park. Residents can park in these

public spaces and still be within a 2 minute walk of their homes. Other public on-street spaces are also available within the same range or closer. Additional underutilized private lots sit behind the site as well. The future parking strategy should include a shared parking agreement with the adjacent property owners.

The first design for this site illustrates a mixed-use building with ground floor retail along W. Union Street, a small supply of covered parking at the back, and housing on the upper floors. The second option adds a recessed fourth floor for outdoor terraces and wonderful views beyond.

## 8.2 RECOMMENDATION

*Utilize a shared parking strategy for the Kimbrell's site redevelopment.*



## Existing Conditions



## Kimbrell's Site

Top to bottom / Existing conditions of the site as of early 2017. While the front facade is consistent until the adjacent second story building at the far left, the last parcel that appears to be part of the Kimbrell's site is owned by a separate landlord and would remain as is (shown with a dashed square) / Option One has three stories comprised of ground floor retail and upper story housing / Option Two has an additional recessed fourth floor with terraces

## Proposed Improvements - Option 1



## Proposed Improvements - Option 2



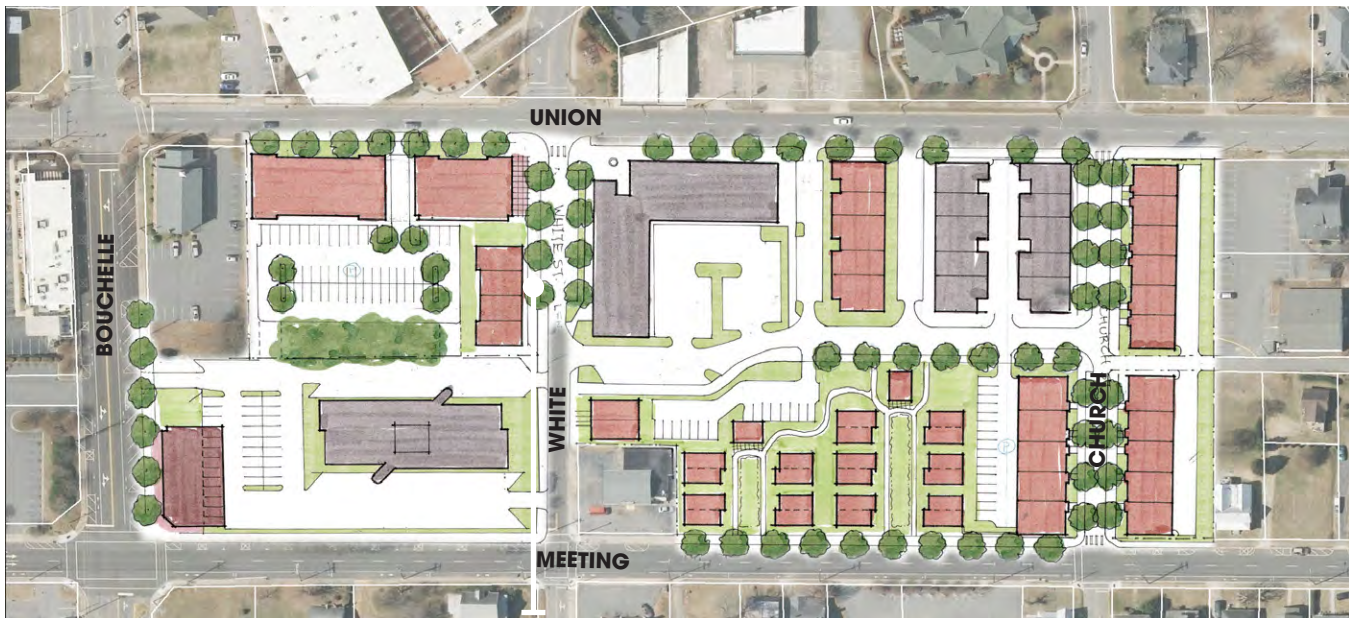
## Union Square | Option 1

This area is prime for redevelopment for the following reasons:

- » Proximity to a two large employment centers: City Hall and the Burke County Courthouse,
- » Proximity to a recently constructed mixed use center along White and E. Union Streets,
- » Ample amount of vacant lots in the area.

This development opportunity emphasizes the need for a wide range of housing types and the flexibility of planning solutions for them. Both options expand upon the existing townhome typology by adding additional units in vacant lots across Church Street and at the corner of Church and E. Meeting Streets. Also, a layout issue exists where the fronts of the townhomes along Ora Place face the parking lot and side of the commercial building across the

underutilized lawn. The redevelopment would infill the lawn with new townhomes that face the fronts of the existing townhomes and expose the back to the parking lot. Other townhome and apartment units are proposed in vacant lots along E. Union Street and E. Meeting Street. Those along Union have a mix of unit types with a plaza at the intersection of Union and White Streets, which responds to the existing plazas on all other corners of the intersection. Another apartment complex is proposed at the corner of E. Meeting and Bouchelle Street in an attempt to bring the built environment to the street edge and anchor the corner, as well as infill some of the unused spaces in the existing parking lot. This building will catalyze development at the intersection which currently has a vacant lot and parking that will be available for future development.



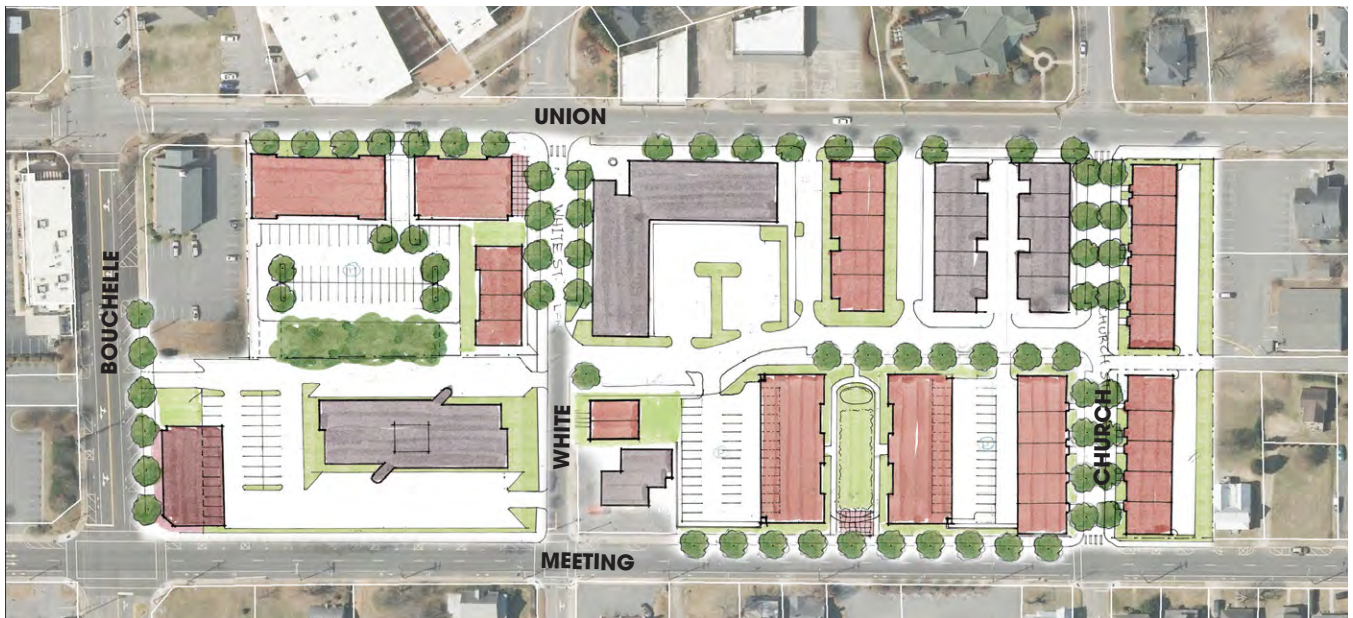
Top / Union Square Master Plan Option 1 Above, left to right / New development along White Street / Corner of Church and E. Meeting Streets

## Union Square | Option 2

This option illustrates a different approach to housing along E. Meeting Street. The two multi-family buildings face onto a large formal green space and have parking underneath accessed from the rear of the units. The massing continues at the scale of the existing mixed use and townhome complex while still respecting the scale of the surrounding neighborhood.

### 8.3 RECOMMENDATION

*Development at Union Square should include a variety of housing typologies and public spaces that tie into the existing context of the neighborhood.*



**Top** / Looking down Church Street / Union Square Master Plan Option 2 / **Above, left to right** / Looking down E. Union Street / Convenience store proposed for preservation at corner of White and Meeting Streets



**Union Square | Option 1 | Development Totals**

- » 48 multi-family units
- » 5 townhomes
- » 22 duplex cottages

This option shows a series of eleven duplex cottage courts along E. Meeting Street. They are one-to-two floors with one shared wall between the two units. They are characterized as cottage courts by their orientation around green spaces, as opposed to facing onto a street or parking lot. This introduces a new housing type into downtown Morganton that is ideal for those wishing to be a little closer to nature without the high price of owning a single-family home or maintaining a private yard.







**Union Square | Option 2 | Development Totals**

- » 106 multi-family units
- » 5 townhomes



## South Depot Plan

This plan illustrates the re-engineered intersection at Sterling and Green Streets. This new intersection creates a safer pedestrian and cycling environment by stopping traffic at a signal and removing the free-flow right lanes where Sterling Street currently splits to create northwest bound Green Street. The future plan slows traffic or brings vehicles to a complete stop as they enter this prominent gateway. The area is characterized by a dangerous slope in the land, where drivers may find it difficult to see up the hill and around the existing curve. Due to the proposed safety improvements, the ability to develop this area into a full district, with buildings around the new intersection provides the city with a much needed grand entry. Many visitors enter downtown through this intersection, and the new South Depot District introduces visitors to the character and identity of the City of Morganton. The area also serves as a backdrop to the new housing development coming to the Drexel building across the railroad track.

The plan preserves the renovated depot building, which drives the name and character for this

redevelopment opportunity. Morganton Station, the existing mixed use development, uses the railroad identity as well. Due to the steep slopes in the area, much of the land around the new intersection is still not suitable for buildings. However, the new buildings on the hill should be iconic and characteristic of downtown to provide a sense of place as visitors enter the city. They should also compliment the existing architecture of Morganton Station and provide a public plaza to interact between the buildings. On the other side of the intersection, across Sterling Street, two new buildings are proposed to help anchor the new intersection. These should continue the urban fabric and character of the existing buildings along Sterling Street.

### 8.4 RECOMMENDATION

*The South Depot District should contribute to downtown's southern gateway with new buildings and enhanced landscaping.*

**Top** / South Depot Master Plan / **Below**, left to right / The railroad bridge underpass, serving as the current gateway into downtown from the southeast / Morganton Station development / Farmer's Market parking lot



## Oak Hill Iron Block

This block of small scale infill development reduces the unnecessarily large parking lot, improves the existing alley connection, and builds upon the character of the Oak Hill Ironworks building. The artistic expression flowing out from Oak Hill inspired this block of infill to exemplify the creative potential extending past the four walls of their building. With this idea in mind, the plan illustrates eight artist lofts with garage workspaces on the ground floor. These face onto the alley and the artistic process can spill out into the public realm with artists working outside their studios and by sanctioning temporary art exhibits in parking spaces. The illustration on the next page even illustrates a street mural in this alley.

The alley improvements also emphasize the need for a better connection between the two most iconic historic buildings in downtown: the Historic Courthouse and the old manor house used for the Federal Reserve Bank. These two open green spaces should be connected by a series of celebrated public spaces. The alley improvements start at the

end closest to the bank while a hardscaped plaza pulls people in from the other side, opposite the courthouse. This also provides an opportunity for more buildings to open up into the alley from the Union Street side. Some second floor residents already have beautiful porches facing the alley, and there are existing art stores that can open onto the alley as well. Other public spaces on the block include an existing green space with large trees at the corner of King Street and Meeting Street, which would remain.

The plan also proposes infill townhomes to respond to those across Meeting Street. An additional mixed-use building is proposed to screen the parking within the block and provide a continuous frontage along Meeting Street.

### 8.5 RECOMMENDATION

*The Oak Hill Iron Block should be enhanced with a revised parking strategy and creative infill development.*

**Below, left / Oak Hill Iron Block Master Plan / Right, top to bottom / Behind buildings along Sterling Street / Driveway beside Oak Hill Iron with view to the Historic Courthouse / Existing pocket park at corner**





Existing Conditions

Proposed Improvements



Oak Hill Iron Block / Alleyscape with infill artist live/work units and Trompe l'oeil street art creating an optical illusion of three-dimensions





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# Management & Operations Strategies

**Parking**

**Policy**

**Financing & Incentives**

**Events & Programming**



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OCTOBER 10

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## 9.1 Parking

As noted on page 29, parking in downtown Morganton is plentiful. Upon analyzing supply versus demand, the downtown area actually has a surplus of around 500 spaces. It is also worth noting that the newly adopted planning ordinance removed all parking requirements for development in downtown. While it is likely that a space may be available directly in front of a destination, visitors generally have to be willing to walk a few blocks in order to patronize local businesses and utilize downtown's amenities.

### Short Term Parking Strategies

A few simple strategies will increase the available parking for patrons to the downtown core. Viewing parking as a utility and managing it as such will improve the perception of parking issues in downtown with real results.

- » Enforce current timed spaces and make all parking near the core intersection of Union and Sterling two hour.
- » Experiment with reverse angle parking by having an event educating the public and allowing them to practice the movement. Test this conversion out for a few months with temporary paint and cones.
- » Coordinate private parking areas through shared parking easements held by the city
- » Continue to upgrade wayfinding signage with uniform and easily identifiable public parking signs to guide visitors, as well as clearly mark private lots.
- » Better utilize public land and right-of-way to increase public parking, on and off the street. This can be done by converting parallel on-street parking to angled or reverse angled where possible and re-configuring inefficient parking lots.
- » Create pick-up and drop-off zones for shared parking services, such as the local service known as Go 2 Guy, and subsidize shared rides to lower parking demand.
- » Partner with Ridgeline Trolley to expand their service into a downtown route with extended hours and predictable service.

## Case Study: Altamonte Springs Subsidized Ride Share

A few towns in the U.S. have begun to look to shared ride service providers like Uber and Lyft to enhance their public transit systems. The city of Altamonte Springs, in central Florida, has a population of 42,000 and is likely the first town in the nation to enter into an agreement with Uber as a public transit provider. The city had issues landing state or federal funding for public transit, so they reached out to the private market. The city had a plan for an on-demand bus service that would cost approximately \$1.5 million for one year, but they've budgeted 1/3 of that to subsidize ride sharing in the city through Uber. The city would pay 20% of the cost of the ride if it begins and ends within the city limits and 25% if it begins and ends at the local light rail station.

**“No place is worth caring about that doesn't have a parking problem.”**

-Rollin Stanley



**Clockwise from top left** / High quality locational signage with artwork (Davidson, NC) / Local Ridgeline Trolley / Signage with high contrast colors and motivational information to encourage walking / Reverse angle parking with educational signage (Des Moines, IA)



## Long Term Parking Strategies

As downtown continues to evolve, longer term strategies for parking include:

- » Redesign the parking at Martha's Park as a shared parking lot at the intersection of College and Queen Streets.
- » Utilize app-based parking occupancy sensors that show real-time availability of parking spaces and offer pay-by-phone convenience. (Passport app)
- » Increase parking fees based on peak hour pricing
- » Incorporate a bike-share program with stations around key destinations in downtown.
- » Explore autonomous vehicle fleets when the technology is available.



### 9.1 RECOMMENDATION

Use both short term and long term parking strategies to manage this public utility.

**Above /** Benefits of utilizing autonomous vehicles

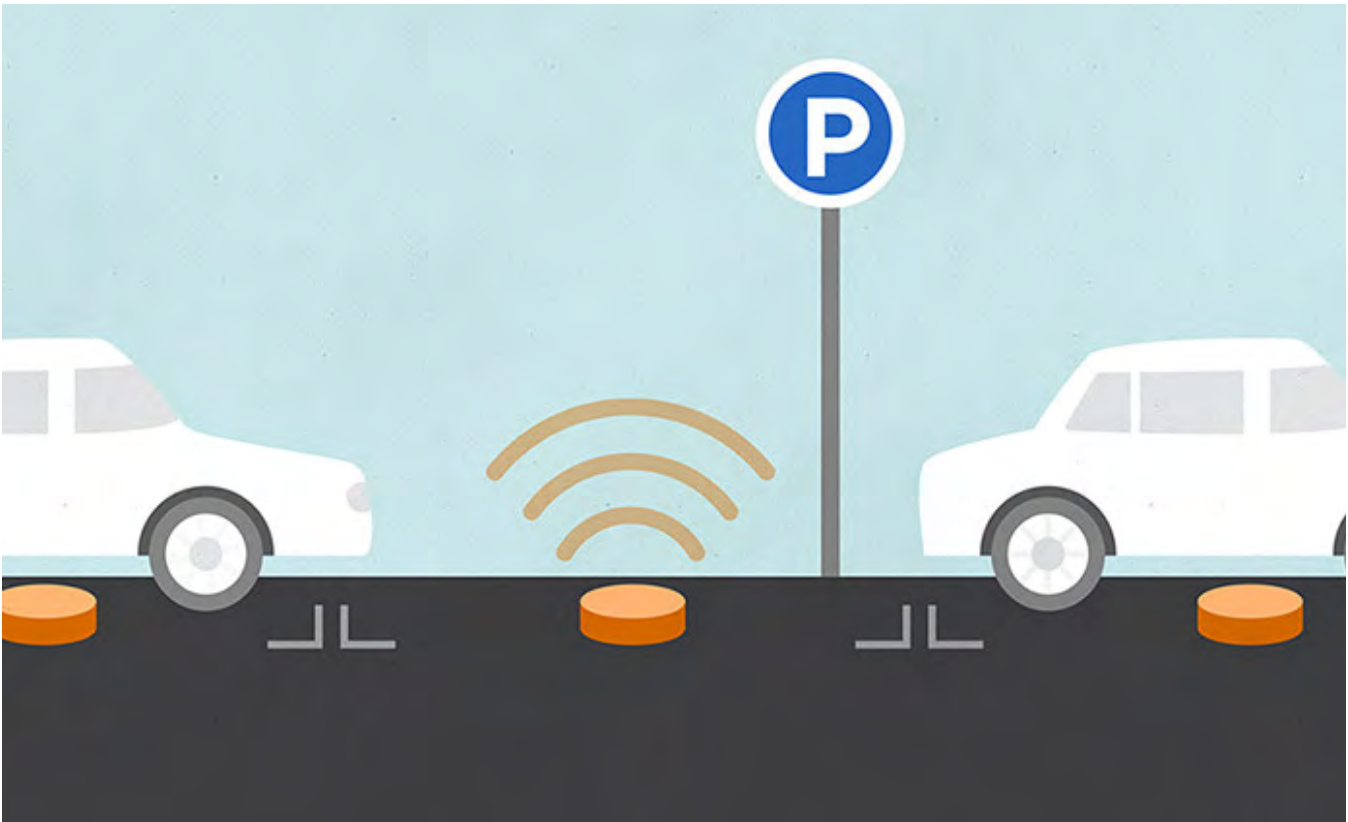


**Above /** B-Cycle station on Rail Trail (Charlotte, NC)  
**Below and Right /** Bike Share (Winston-Salem, NC)





**Clockwise from top left /** Passport Parking app / Olli, a Shared Autonomous Vehicle (SAV), can carry 8-12 passengers, has 360 degree sensors, has a top speed 25 mph, and is monitored remotely by human operators at all times. (Local Motors) / Occupancy sensors can be easily applied to existing parking spaces / Parking sensors applied to each spot can transmit occupancy via bluetooth capability



## 9.2 Policy Strategies

### Code Changes & Design Guidelines

The newly adopted zoning ordinance removed many barriers to development in downtown including eliminating parking requirements and allowing more interesting signage on the buildings and sidewalks. However, an overlay on Union Street that prohibits the development of bed and breakfasts needs to be reevaluated. As noted on page 76, boutique hotels and bed and breakfasts should be part of the lodging strategy for downtown Morganton.

A few other policy strategies to add to the toolbox include:

#### **Ground Floor Use Overlay**

**District:** The addition of a ground floor active use overlay district would ensure vibrancy over the long term. The overlay should initially be confined to portions of Union and Sterling Streets and frontages around The Courthouse Square. The City of Clayton, NC, is currently going through the process of

adopting a similar policy. For more details, see page 180 in Chapter 10.

#### **Viewshed Protection**

**Overlay District:** With a desire by the community to protect the mountain views, particularly from the historic courthouse, a viewshed overlay can be assessed in downtown and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Communities, such as the City of Cumberland, Maryland, have adopted similar policies in their zoning ordinances. Developing a topographically accurate digital model of the downtown would be a worthwhile endeavor for staff. This tool would allow new developments to be explored in their proper scale/context to assess the impact to critical views of the mountains and of the historic courthouse.

#### **Commercial Maintenance**

**Ordinance:** Many communities, including Albemarle, NC, have instituted commercial maintenance ordinances in their downtown districts to combat the

common problem of derelict buildings detracting from the area's success. While most buildings in Morganton are well-maintained, this type of ordinance provides another tool to ensure that all property owners are contributing to the care and quality of the downtown.

#### **Downtown Design**

**Guidelines:** Many communities, including Statesville, NC, have instituted downtown design guidelines that provide guidance to owners and tenants. Facade treatment, paint, rooftop terraces, outdoor dining, furniture, parking, signage, lighting and landscaping are just a few of the items generally found in design guidelines. The city can either appoint a design review board to handle the applications or staff can manage the process.

### 9.2 RECOMMENDATION

*Expand the policy toolbox to include a ground floor use overlay district, viewshed protection overlay district, commercial maintenance ordinance and downtown design guidelines.*

City staff need a variety of tools in order to maximize the resiliency of downtown Morganton.



## 9.3 Financing & Incentives

The City of Morganton will need to tackle the implementation of the plan recommendations as funding allows and by utilizing creative financing and incentive packages. The implementation matrix in Chapter 10 outlines if an action item is a capital or operating expenditure or if it will be taken care of with private or non-city funding.

Downtown Morganton offers several incentive options for businesses and entrepreneurs:

- » Facade Improvement Incentive Grants and Loans
- » The Development Incentive Grant
- » CDBG Small Business Loan
- » Revolving Loan Fund

These options are described in detail on page 74.

### Logistical Strategies

In addition to the Retail Attraction Committee described on page 75, an additional logistical tactic follows:

**Schedule a commercial broker tour of Downtown.** With a “spit shine” and some seasonal color, a series of broker awareness lunches should reach out to the commercial and residential brokerage communities of both Charlotte and Asheville. These events should provide lunch and a walking tour of possible spaces for retail and restaurants. The goal is to create a buzz among those that represent possible retailers and restaurateurs that are seeking new or expanded locations. Every participant should be provided with a full marketing package and specific information on available space. These events should be conducted in the spring and the fall to take advantage of the nice temperatures and the full bloom of the landscaping.

#### 9.3 RECOMMENDATION

*Schedule a commercial broker tour of downtown with representation from both Charlotte and Asheville.*

## Grants & Programs

Other North Carolina communities have developed grants and programs to promote investment in their downtown areas. The funding for these is often appropriated through the City’s budget. The following are incentives that should be explored as additions to the current Morganton offerings:

### Downtown Business Marketing Grant

**(Monroe, NC):** The ultimate goal of creating downtown as a destination is directly tied to the marketing campaigns potential visitors and residents see. This grant is seen as a co-op marketing and advertising program that provides a 50-50 matching grant to new businesses for up to 50% reimbursement of their marketing budget.

### Residential Investment Grant (Monroe, NC):

As noted throughout this document, Morganton needs to diversify and add housing in downtown. While often smaller in number, upper story lofts are popular but often complicated by the upgrades related to the building code. This grant assists with the development of residential units in the upper levels of downtown buildings up to \$20 per \$100 (up to 20%) of the assessed tax value.

### Public Utility Grant (Benson, NC):

Often, setting up new utility services and the energy bills in older, less efficient buildings have higher costs for new business owners. This grant reimburses 25% of each month’s utility bill for the period of one year.

#### 9.4 RECOMMENDATION

*Expand the toolbox of local grants, programs and incentives available through city budget appropriations.*

## Tax Incentives

While state and federal incentives have been available for several decades, many cities are finding that providing local incentives can bridge the gap of market viability for complicated project.

### Existing State & Federal Incentives

**Federal Tax Credits:** Since 1976, the federal government has offered a federal income tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic structures. Today, this credit consists of a 20% credit on income-producing historic properties. Rental housing development also qualifies for several different programs including Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Tax-Exempt Bonds, Workforce Housing Loan Program, and Rental Production Program Loans. To learn more, visit <https://www.nchfa.com/rental-housing-partners/rental-developers/find-rental-development-financing-options>.

**State Tax Credits:** For those rehabilitation projects that qualify for and obtain federal tax credits, North Carolina also provides a 20% state tax credit. This gives a combined 40% credit against eligible project costs for income-producing projects. North Carolina also provides a 30% credit for the rehabilitation of non-income producing historic properties, including private residences.

### Suggested Local Incentives

**Local Tax Credits:** To build on the current Development Incentive Grant (DIG) program (explained on page 74), the City should consider expanding these tax incentives to housing developers in the downtown as well.

## 9.5 RECOMMENDATION

*In addition to state and federal tax credits, expand the local DIG program to include local tax incentives for housing projects.*



Incentives give entrepreneurs a better chance of opening successful businesses in downtown.



## 9.4 Events & Programming

Smaller, more frequent events are what keep a community engaged. Events like TGIF and the Farmer's Market tap into that engagement and provide a predictability of programming that encourages frequent visitation.

As mentioned on page 72, programming in downtown has to be experiential. The two elements discussed include:

- » Building regular ambient and impulse programming
- » Activating The Courthouse Square

The design changes to The Courthouse Square, including the addition of a permanent stage venue and an open lawn, will open up the space to a variety of programming opportunities. These may include: Movies on the Square, the Farmer's Market (both Saturdays and mid-week),

and Salsa on the Square. Design elements such as the interactive water feature will naturally activate the space on a regular basis. Also, particularly for children, design flexibility will allow the city to provide seasonal programming such as a small ice rink.

To build on those ideas, the plan cites several opportunities to rethink the spaces in between—the alleys, city streets, public plazas and even parking spaces. Targeted programming in these often leftover areas will add another layer of energy and expand the diversity groups that do not always attend town wide events.

The conversion of the traffic pattern to two-way will also open up new event opportunities. With more choices, the ability to close down particular stretches of streets such as Union Street are less of a hassle. Communities are also exploring the idea of

event grant funding to support downtown vitality while alleviating some of the logistical work to other city organizations. Applicants typically apply in annual cycles to enhance or expand events that promote downtown as a destination.

### 9.6 RECOMMENDATION

*Program smaller public and semi-public spaces with more frequent programming.*

### 9.7 RECOMMENDATION

*Utilize the streets as key public spaces.*

### 9.8 RECOMMENDATION

*Offer event grant funding to support downtown vitality by non-city organizations.*



Union would present a wonderful opportunity for an outdoor street dinner with multiple restaurants contributing various courses. Outdoor street dinner, Cullman, Alabama *Image Credit: visitcullman.org*



On the Square! Free Concerts

119

Elite Hair Styling

WALK INS  
WELCOME

RECYCLE

121

DEWALT

# 10

## Implementation

**Top 10 Projects in 5 Years**

**Implementation Matrix**

**How we know we succeeded**



## 10.1 Top 10 in 5

# 1

Complete the two-way conversion



# 2

Adopt a ground floor active use overlay district for the core blocks



# 3

Increase retail and restaurant tenants on the ground floor of the core to 90%



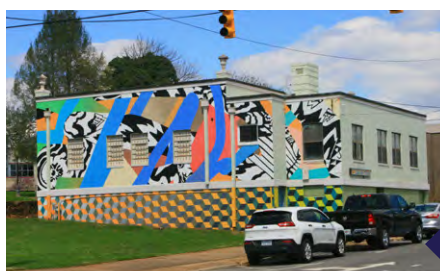
# 4

Attract a hotel to downtown



# 5

Move the Arts Council to pioneer a new block



# 6

Renovate Courthouse Square



# 7

Construct 100 new housing units in downtown



# 8

Improve College Street to a "green street" connecting the downtown to the Broughton and State Property Campus



# 9

Bury or relocate the overhead utilities around the core



# 10

Create an outdoor courtyard space in the Union Street alley

# 1

## Complete the two-way conversion



### The Path Forward

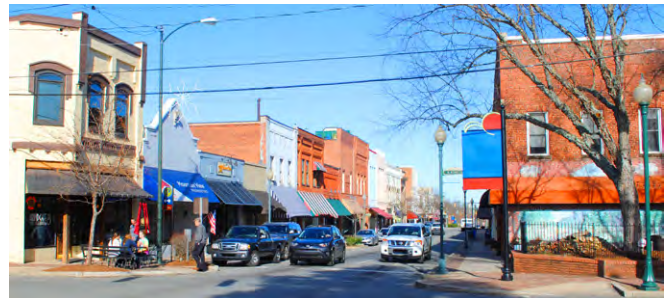
The conversion of the one-way system to two way operation in downtown is critical to the continued evolution of downtown Morganton. As explained in detail on page 95, this key goal will:

- » Reduce driver confusion and improve vehicular access (most direct route)
- » Increase retail visibility and create higher levels of economic activity
- » Create a more walkable, safer pedestrian environment by reducing traffic speed through friction
- » Decrease the crash rate

Other communities in North Carolina have converted their one-way pair system back to two-way operation and may be able to offer insight into their experience.

- » Main Street/CBD Loop, North Wilkesboro, NC
- » South Street/Lenoir Street, Raleigh, NC
- » Main Street/Chapel Hill Street, Durham, NC
- » Spring Street/Cannon Street, Charleston, SC
- » Hargett Street/ Martin Street, Raleigh, NC

While the transportation team conducted a preliminary assessment of this transition, the next step in that process is a comprehensive feasibility study. With the data in hand, the final design and construction of the two-way system can be implemented.



Top to bottom / 1 1950s Two Way Traffic on Union / 2 Present Day One Way Traffic on Union / 3 Proposed Two Way Traffic on Union

### Making it Happen

- Complete a comprehensive feasibility study for NCDOT review.
- Complete final design and construction drawings.
- Dedicate capital dollars and pursue grant funding.
- Implement two-way system including the four entry intersections.

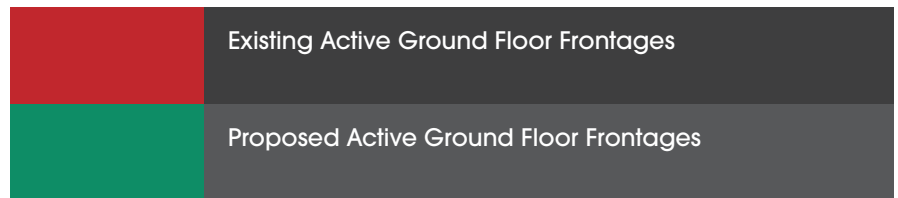
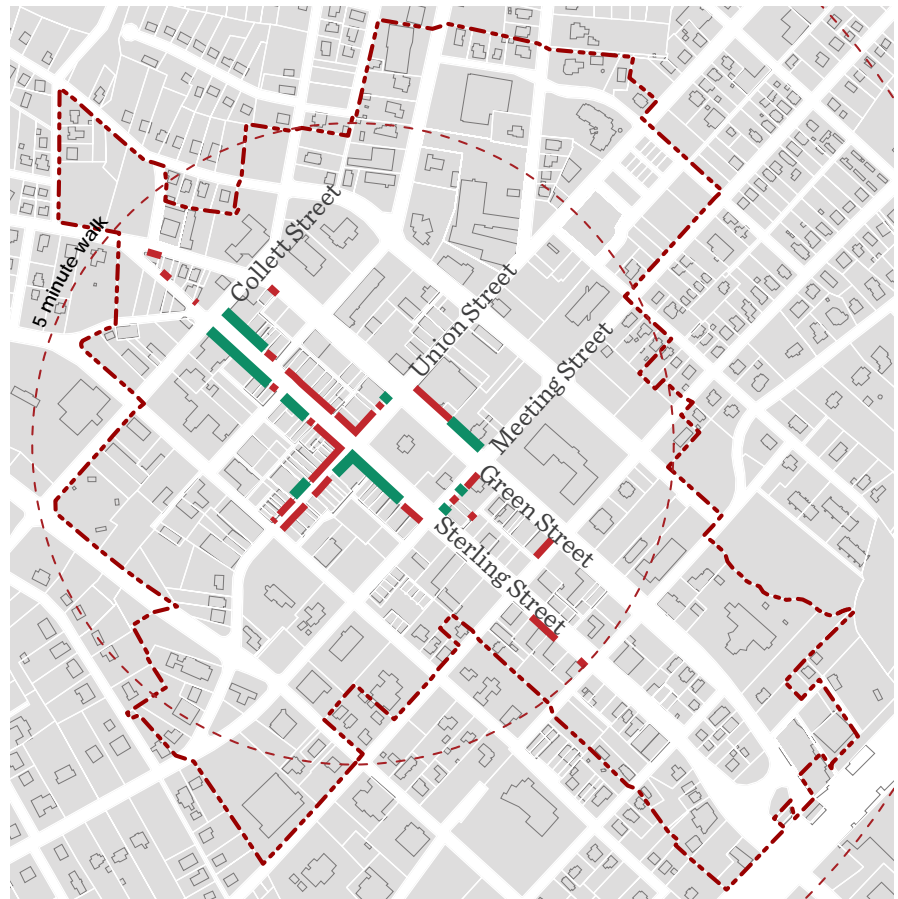
# 2

Adopt a ground floor active use overlay district for the core blocks

## The Path Forward

The magic of vibrancy in a downtown setting is tied just as closely to what is happening on the ground floor of the buildings as it is in getting the streetscape elements right. Through an overlay district ordinance applied to the core intersection frontages of Union and Sterling Streets, the city can require active ground floor uses instead of other activities/uses that appear lifeless or unoccupied during business hours. By working with property owners and interested tenants, this transition can take place when current lease agreements expire. As the city has already demonstrated, it may be partially accomplished by a simple shuffling of existing tenants into other spaces.

The diagram on this page illustrates the existing and proposed active ground floor frontages. It is important to note that the entire CBD is not included in this overlay. The key areas for activation include Union and Sterling Streets and all the frontages surrounding Courthouse Square.



Other cities with similar overlay requirements on specific streets include:

- » Beaufort, SC
- » McMinnville, OR
- » San Jose, CA
- » Austin, TX
- » Atlanta, GA
- » Washington D.C.
- » Charlotte, NC

## Making it Happen

- Engage the property owners in the impacted area with an open dialogue.
- Write a draft of the ordinance and create a map of the overlay district.
- Adopt the overlay district ordinance.

# 3

Increase retail and restaurant tenants on the ground floor of the core to 90%



## The Path Forward

Building on the idea of creating a design standard for ground floor use, the city's goal is to have 90% of the frontage as retail/restaurant tenants along Sterling and Union Streets at the core intersection. This goal should be met within the first five years of plan adoption. The city is well on its way to accomplishing that level of activity and the retail strategies provided in Chapter 5 will help push that percentage forward.

The two-fold benefit of the active uses on the ground floors in Morganton is that it not only solidifies downtown as a destination, but it also connects the emerging brewery scene from north to south. The book ends of Fonta Flora and Catawba Brewery with Brown Mountain Bottleworks on the square would be complemented by a continuous frontage and pleasant walk for patrons.

The energy that multiple restaurants in a block can create is contagious and spills onto the streets organically. Restaurants actually perform better when there are more options; competition breeds better quality and increased foot traffic, and again, helps contribute to the ultimate goal of downtown Morganton as a destination.



Top to bottom / 1 The Kitchen Shop / 2 The Natural Olive

## Making it Happen

- ☑ Utilize the retail attraction committee to pursue new retail/restaurants in other locations.
- ☑ Offer incentives to building owners that actively recruit retailers for ground floor spaces.
- ☑ Use the improved website to recruit tenants that contribute to the overall vibrancy of downtown.



# 4

Attract a hotel to downtown

## The Path Forward

The plan gives two physical options for a potential hotel location. (as noted on pages 77-78).

The lodging equation in downtown doesn't have to be solved with simply one large hotel. Smaller, boutique style hotels and bed and breakfasts in walkable settings are highly desirable. A variety of options will help accommodate the wide spectrum of visitors Morganton sees on an annual basis—from the retired couple seeking a history lesson to younger adults following the craft brew scene or seeking outdoor activities.

## Making it Happen

- ☑ Shop potential sites to hotel developers.
- ☑ Ensure high quality building design and ground level retail/restaurant space.



## Case Study: Hotel Florence | Florence, South Carolina

Opening in 2013, Hotel Florence was the culmination of a two year journey that began with five local businessmen having a vision to spur revitalization of their derelict downtown. The City of Florence and other partners were able to assist Downtown Hospitality, Inc. to renovate three historic buildings and create a 49 room boutique hotel. This catalyst was the beginning of new investment in downtown living, restaurants and retail.

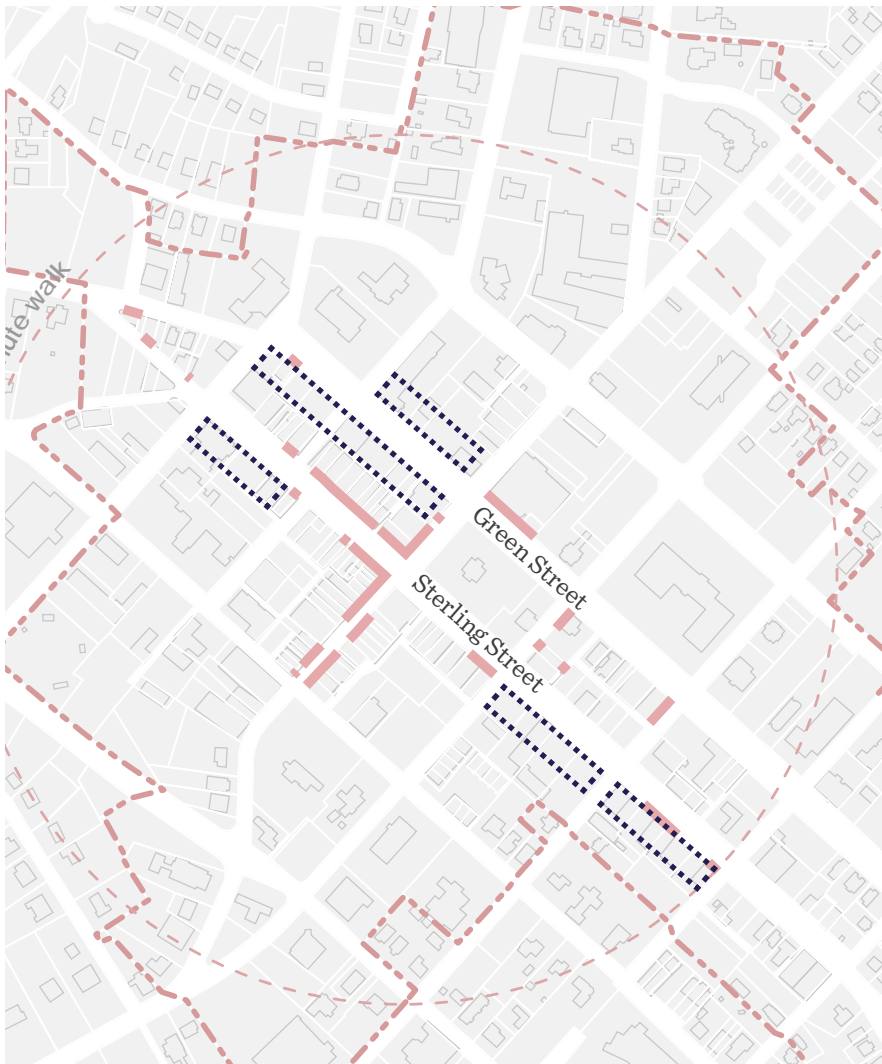
# 5

Move the Arts Council to pioneer a new block

## The Path Forward

Chapter 6 provides over 50 specific action items related to public art in downtown Morganton—even outlining a top four projects in two years. To add to those goals, moving the Arts Council into a new block needs to be a priority. Traditionally, local arts councils are the pioneers, the ones who show the rest of the community what creativity and innovation can produce.

With the planned improvements to Courthouse Square, the Arts Council will need to vacate their current location in the former jail building. This move is an opportunity to examine a few options along Sterling & Green Streets that need some new investment. After the street conversion in which Sterling becomes the “main street” of downtown, careful renovation and sensitive infill along this corridor will be vital. The image on page 132 illustrates one example of a potential location for the Arts Council.



Five blocks identified as options for the relocation of the Burke County Arts Council

## Making it Happen

- ☑ Evaluate the five potential locations with this question in mind: Which area would be most improved by the Arts Council being located there?
- ☑ Investigate and compare the cost of each location.
- ☑ Engage other local partners such as WPCC and the local school art programs.
- ☑ Host a Downtown Morganton/ Burke County Arts Council fundraiser to kick start the project.
- ☑ Make the move and inhabit the new block!

# 6

## Renovate The Courthouse Square

### The Path Forward

The Courthouse Square is the beating heart of downtown, and improvements are critical to reinforce its presence and usefulness, but also respect the space as the emotional center for the city. The square has been on the table for enhancements since the 1997 plan. Based on the dynamics of downtown today, the timing is right for the transformation to commence. Beginning on page 105, the plan outlines both general recommendations for The Courthouse Square along with two detailed options. The key components of the improvements include the following:

- » Simplify the landscape design and plant large shade trees along the perimeter.
- » Create an uninterrupted open lawn as a multi-use space.
- » Provide elements that activate the space including movable seating, interactive water, and a permanent multi-use structure.



The Historic Courthouse Square (Source: City of Morganton)

### Making it Happen

- ☑ Dedicate capital funding to the project.
- ☑ Form a Friends of the Square volunteer group.
- ☑ Ensure the final preferred design achieves the goals set forth in this plan and has community buy-in.
- ☑ Engage a consultant to complete a detailed master plan and construction documents.
- ☑ Complete the construction.
- ☑ Find partnerships for programming and, events, and long-term maintenance.



Construct 100 new housing units in downtown

### The Path Forward

Both the baby boomers and the millennials in Morganton desire urban living for its ease of maintenance and walkability to downtown's offerings. The key goal of diversifying and expanding housing in downtown is thoroughly explored beginning on page 117. A manageable goal over the next five years is to see the construction of 100 quality housing units in downtown.

### Making it Happen

- ☑ Achieve 100 units using a combination of upper story lofts, townhome infill, multiplexes, and perhaps, apartments.
- ☑ Encourage the new housing hits a variety of price points to promote continued economic diversity in downtown.

**Top to bottom** / Urban Mansions (2,4,& 6 Units; Wilmington, NC) / Townhomes (Habersham, Beaufort, SC) / Apartments (Vancouver, BC, Canada)



# 8

Convert College Street to a “green street” connecting the downtown to the Broughton and State Property Campus



## The Path Forward

As recommended on page 127, College Street is an important community connector between the state property, downtown, and Catawba Meadows Recreation Center outside of downtown. The key is to ensure all modes of transportation are safe, particularly bicycle/pedestrian and that the route is pleasant and attractive. Two key recreation amenities, Martha’s Park and Collett Street Recreation Center, are also located on College Street. The proposed dedicated bicycle facilities not only accommodate cyclists utilizing all of these public amenities, but they also provide a buffer to protect pedestrians from moving vehicles. Regular street tree plantings and spot landscaped medians contribute to the comfort and image of College Street as a place for all.



Case Study / East Boulevard, Charlotte, NC / 18,800-20,600 ADT at High Travel Speeds / Outcome was better than imagined and has created a vibrant people place with corridor travel times remaining the same. Source: Dan Gallagher, Charlotte DOT



## Making it Happen

- ☑ Add College Street as a capital project, but also investigate grant funding.
- ☑ Complete a feasibility study of the lane reduction.
- ☑ Complete the final design and construction documents.

# 9

Bury or relocate the overhead utilities around the core

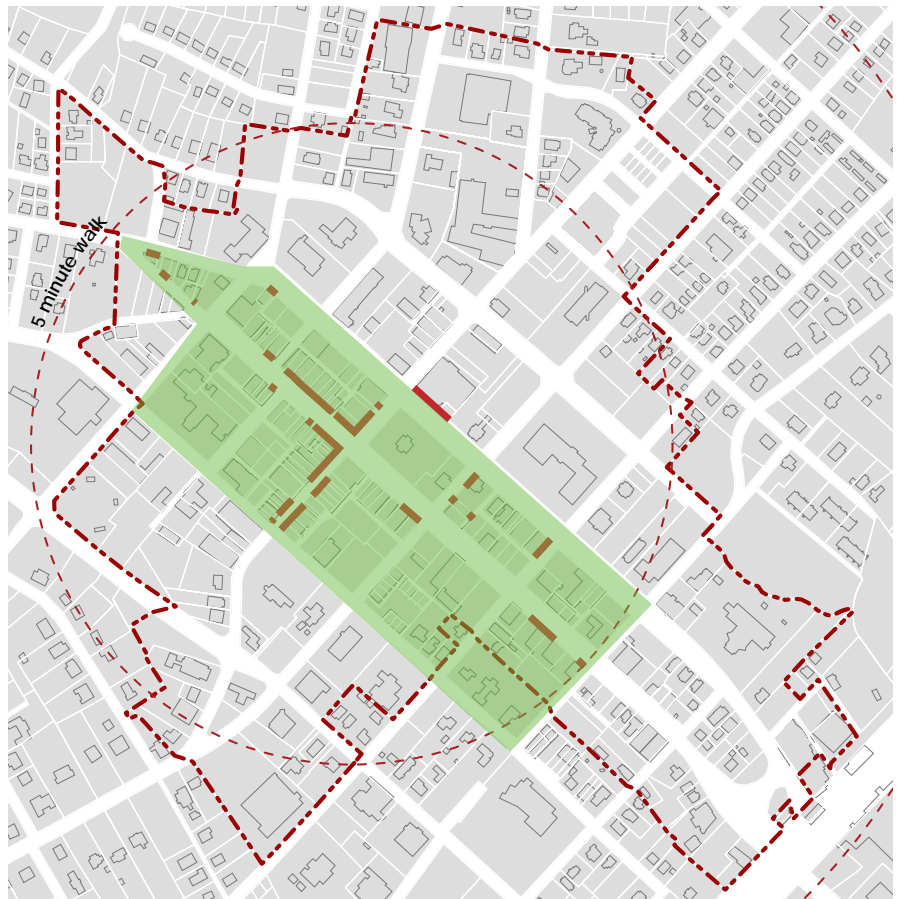
## The Path Forward

Overhead utilities in a downtown environment detract from the overall aesthetic and can often create dangerous situations for pedestrians. The city's electrical wires are mostly above grade and the system is under a "repair as break" policy with the goal to go underground when those repairs happen. Union Street's Sternberg lighting is the exception with all underground service and receptacles in the tree wells. New public investments, such as improvements to Courthouse Square, need to ensure the costs of burying the utilities are part of the overall project budget.

The diagram on this page illustrates the priority zone for utility burial.

## Making it Happen

- ☑ Adopt the priority zone map as part of the overlay district in downtown.
- ☑ Require developers to place utilities underground for all projects within the CBD.



**Top to bottom / Priority Zone for Utility Burial (shown in green) / Overhead utilities on Sterling Street at Courthouse Square**

# 10

Create an outdoor courtyard space in the Union Street alley

## The Path Forward

As described in Chapter 7, many of the ideas that will transform downtown involve having fun and experimentation. The first space the city should take to the next level is the Union Street alley behind Benjamin and Libba's and Brown Mountain Bottleworks. This is the perfect opportunity for a public-private partnership between local business owners and the city. The next steps are:

## Making it Happen

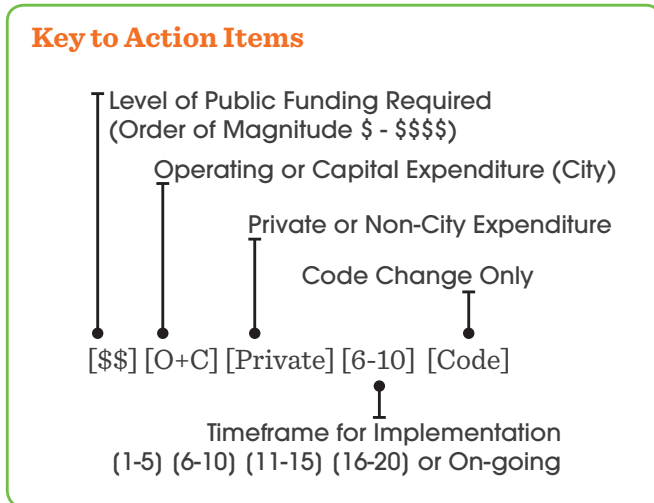
- ☑ Setup a Go Fund Me page for the space and utilize social media to get the word out. Have the city match funds collected. This money can be utilized to purchase the furnishings (tables and movable seating) along with string lighting and plant material.
- ☑ Engage a local artist to paint a dragon themed mural.
- ☑ Ask the local garden club, other civic groups and local schools to create a vertical garden in the space along with larger containers for seasonal color.
- ☑ Coordinate the relocation of trash/recycling/services with the city to an alternate or screened location.



Conceptual image showing Union Street alley on the square transformed through partnerships

## 10.2 Implementation Matrix

In order for the vision and recommendations expressed in this plan to move forward, specific action items will need to be implemented by the City of Morganton. Many of the action items seek to provide the conditions under which the vision can be achieved, by way of providing sensible land use regulation, necessary public investments, the development of appropriate programs and policies, encouraging catalyst projects and other actions.



The action items in the table are prioritized based on the legend noted above. The funding is listed as an order of magnitude as way to evaluate the relative costs of one action over another. As a means of attempting to quantify these relative costs over a

twenty year period, the table below summarizes an estimated range of cost values that may be used.

Order of Magnitude	Estimated Cost Range
\$	\$1 - \$50,000
\$\$	\$50,000 - \$250,000
\$\$\$	\$250,000 - \$1 million
\$\$\$\$	\$1 million+

The execution of the implementation steps will likely be phased and is subject to a variety of factors, which determine their timing. These include:

- » The availability of personnel and financial resources necessary to implement specific proposals;
- » Whether an implementation step is a necessary precursor to or component of the rational evaluation of a new development project;
- » The interdependence of the various implementation tasks, in particular, the degree to which implementing one item is dependent upon the successful completion of another item; and,
- » The relative severity of the challenge which a particular implementation task is designed to remedy.

In view of these factors, it is not possible to put forward a precise timetable for the various implementation items. The priority for implementation will be listed by the period in which items should be completed. Year 1-5 items and certain on-going items are the highest priority while Year 6-20+ projects could be completed as resources allow.



Recently implemented streetscape on Bouchelle Street



Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
<b>5 Market Conditions &amp; Retail Strategies</b>												
5.1	Work with local retailers to create a district in the core of downtown with consistent and complimentary hours of operation.	65	\$	O	Public/ Private							X
5.2	To meet the demand of resident customers, retailers should offer a mix of products and services for families and empty nesters at accessible price points with some opportunity for contemporary offerings.	70	\$		Private	X						
5.3	To meet the demand of visiting customers, retailers should offer contemporary and hip/trendy offerings.	71	\$	O			X					
5.4	Increase visitor spending (see Recommendation 5.5) and encourage existing retailers to deepen their penetration into local resident spending (see Recommendation 5.2). Tracking can occur by simply asking people to sign up for a newsletter mailing list or asking for a zip code at the time of sale - both common ways to track customers.	71	\$	O	Public/ Private		X					
5.5	In order to bring experience into retail and attract greater visitor spending, bring the adventure themed attractions outside of downtown into the core retail intersection.	72	\$\$	O+C	Public/ Private		X					
5.6	Offer incentives to building owners that actively recruit retailers for ground floor spaces.	73	\$\$	O+C	Public/ Private		X					
5.7	Judiciously apply a retail overlay district to the core retail intersection to restrict passive and/or non-retail uses. (more information on page 182)	73	\$	O			X					
5.8	Improve the "Call for Business" web page as a retail attraction tool.	73	\$	O		X						
5.9	Initiate a retail attraction committee.	75	\$	O	Public/ Private	X						
5.10	Working with community partners, enhance ambient and impulse programming around the Core Retail Intersection.	77	\$	O	Public/ Private	X						

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
5.11	Utilize interactive water to activate The Courthouse Square on a regular basis and attract families to the Core Retail Intersection.	77	\$\$	C			X					
5.12	Recruit developers familiar with towns like Morganton to implement urban housing in downtown.	78	\$	O		X						
5.13	Work to meet demand for downtown housing and improve the housing stock through institutional partnerships.	78	\$	O	Public/ Private	X						
<b>6 Public Art Action Plan</b>												
6.1	Designate the Downtown Municipal Improvement District boundary as the Cultural Arts District boundary.	83	\$	O	Public/ Private							X
6.2	Incentivize local businesses to hire local artists/artisans for decorative murals, ironwork and other enhancements.	83	\$	O	Public/ Private							X
6.3	Develop an ordinance that requires public art in private development.	83	\$	O			X					
6.4	Write guidelines specifying quality and logistics for the startup art projects downtown that begin small and involve artists and students.	83	\$	C	Public/ Private	X						
6.5	Appoint a Public Art Commission.	84	\$	O	Public/ Private	X						
6.6	Establish a public art coordinator position.	84	\$		Private		X					
6.7	Utilize a Percent-for-Art Program to fund public art in both city and county capital projects. Consider adopting a "Percent-For-Art Ordinance."	85	\$	C	Public/ Private		X					
6.8	Secure sponsorships for temporary downtown art programs from local businesses.	85	\$		Private	X						
6.9	Increase downtown's special district tax to fund downtown placemaking projects.	85	\$	O	Private	X						

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
6.10	Explore the placement of a public bond (city, county or WPCC) to fund public art that expands cultural and eco-tourism in downtown.	85	\$	O			X					
6.11	Create Burke County Arts Council Animating Infrastructure Grants.	85	\$		Non-profit		X					
6.12	Pursue grants with The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina (CFWNC) for an environmental art project in Natural and Cultural Resources or Food and Farming.	85	\$	O	Non-profit	X						
6.13	Pursue federally funded "Our Town" grants through the National Endowment for the Arts.	85	\$	O	Non-profit	X						
6.14	Establish a program fund, housed in the Office of Economic Development, to seed small prototype projects and encourage matching funds and participation from local merchants and Morganton's property owners.	85	\$\$	C	Public/ Private	X						
6.15	Partner with WPCC to create a multi-purpose maker space in downtown.	87	\$\$\$\$	C	Public/ Private			X				
6.16	Coordinate with WPCC's Professional Crafts Program Coordinator to create a series of historic art files as trail markers along the downtown Greenway.	87	\$\$	C	Public/ Private		X					
6.17	Showcase WPCC's digital animation work and engage the program to create a temporary light piece for CoMMA's exterior.	87	\$	C	Public/ Private		X					
6.18	Work with CoMMA on programming opportunities at The Courthouse Square including outdoor performing arts.	87	\$	O		X						
6.19	Establish art related programming at the Grace Ridge Retirement Community including: an artist-in-residence program, hands-on workshops (sewing/quilt-making, photography, woodcarving, horticulture, etc.), artwork exhibits, and music	88	\$		Non-profit	X						

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
6.20	Meet with Western Campus Planning to discuss the importance of environmental artists, particularly those working with water, waste and energy issues in communities throughout America.	88	\$	O			X					
6.21	Develop a water demonstration project in downtown Morganton that includes NCSSM's Sustainability Project Leaders, Linda Schmalbeck, Instructor of Biology, and an environmental artist working with water in urban regeneration (rain gardens, storm water, etc). Select a downtown site for the demonstration project with the help of the Department of Water Resources.	88	\$	C				X				
6.22	Craft a kinetic sculpture event that involves students from NCSSM and Morganton's public schools and culminates into a presentation on The Courthouse Square lawn.	88	\$	O			X					
6.23	Commission an environmental artist who creates artwork from recycled plastic through a partnership with Simply Green.	88	\$	C				X				
6.24	Collaborate with the science departments of local schools to utilize plastic to create artwork and showcase the results in downtown Morganton's storefronts and galleries. Sell it to benefit stream cleanup in the area.	88	\$	O		X						
6.25	Conduct an annual sculpture competition with first prize becoming a permanent installation. Arrange the sculptures into an evolving "must see" downtown treasure hunt trail.	89	\$	O		X						
6.26	Create sculpture business sponsorships to help build out the collection. Provide forms to artists and students in Morganton and arrange for their sponsorship by local businesses.	89	\$		Private	X						

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
6.27	Create an annual festival weekend featuring family workshops, e.g., drawings, masks, costumes, hats, etc., offered by The Old School Studio (TOSS) and others, that culminate in a parade around The Courthouse Square. Collaborate with Healing Dragons of Lake James and the Office of Tourism to cross-promote Morganton's festival and the Lake James races through the multi-state Dragon Boat Races website.	89	\$	O		X						
6.28	Create a themed scavenger hunt for children. The narrative for kids to follow on their journey around town should be available online or at kiosks in downtown, as well, as provide an answer key map.	89	\$	O		X						
6.29	Coordinate with property owners to participate in the downtown mural program: Fund the artist(s) fees and materials through local business sponsorships; Appoint a small selection committee for the mural program; Ask interested local artists to submit examples of their work; Create a modest budget for materials and installation/break down, insurance, etc.	91	\$	O	Public/ Private	X						
6.30	Hold a series of "socials" in different venues to gather and celebrate creative talent in Morganton & Burke County.	91	\$	O		X						
6.31	Schedule a series of weekly "Makers Classes." Pay art instructors to teach for three hours each. Experiment with instructors and age groups to discover what people want to learn. Use empty first and second floors of downtown storefronts. Possibilities include knitting, photography, Hmong embroidery, bookmaking, drawing, etc.	91	\$	O		X						

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
6.32	Use the lawn of The Courthouse Square, downtown alleys, and sidewalks as flex space for events, temporary exhibitions, and pop-up arts activities of varying scales.	91	\$	O		X						
6.33	Prepare a Request For Qualifications to select a local artist or designer to create a logo for Morganton's recycling bins and boxes.	91	\$	O			X					
<b>7 Key Goals</b>												
7.1	Convert the one-way pair system to two-way operation and carefully redesign the four impacted intersections.	95	\$\$\$\$	C			X	X				
7.2	Reimagine the terminus of Sterling Street after conversion of the one-way pair system. Utilize a phased approach that begins with tactical interventions.	101	\$-\$\$\$	O+C	Public/ Private		X	X				
7.3	Simplify the landscape design and plant large shade trees along the edges of The Courthouse Square, which requires removing some smaller existing trees.	103	\$\$	C			X					
7.4	Remove the existing sidewalk from the old courthouse building to the Meeting Street edge and create an uninterrupted open lawn as a multi-use space.	103	\$\$	C			X					
7.5	Provide elements that activate the space including movable seating, a unique lighting strategy, interactive water elements and a permanent multi-use structure.	103	\$\$\$	C			X					
7.6	Develop a downtown streetscape master plan to evaluate the existing canopy and create a strategy within the core for species and subsurface treatments..	109	\$\$	C			X					
7.7	Improve the aesthetics of the Wells Fargo facade along The Courthouse Square using tactical interventions.	111	\$	C	Public/ Private		X					

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
7.8	Market downtown as a residential neighborhood with a variety of walkable amenities to both builders and potential buyers.	115	\$	O		X						
7.9	Prioritize housing opportunities in the Flatiron District, the area around City Hall, and the block containing Oak Hill Ironworks.	117	\$\$\$\$		Private	X						
7.10	Prioritize overall community mobility and enhance all downtown gateways.	122	\$\$\$\$	C		X						
7.11	Investigate opportunities to enhance the Sterling Street rail underpass and improve this key gateway.	125	\$\$	C			X					
7.12	Transform College Street into a multi-modal connector by reducing travel lanes, adding cycling facilities, and beautifying the corridor with street trees.	128	\$\$\$\$	C			X					
7.13	Adopt a public art action plan based on the 30+ specific recommendations in Chapter 6.	129	\$	O			X					
7.14	Embrace experimental projects that are low cost yet high impact.	131	\$	O		X						
<b>8 Development &amp; Redevelopment Opportunities</b>												
8.1	Expand housing options in the Flat Iron District and pursue the development of a hotel in the area.	149	\$\$\$\$		Private		X					
8.2	Utilize a shared parking strategy for the Kimbrell's site redevelopment.	153	\$\$	C	Public/ Private		X					
8.3	Development at Union Square should include a variety of housing typologies and public spaces that tie into the existing context of the neighborhood.	156	\$\$\$\$		Private			X				
8.4	The South Depot District should contribute to downtown's southern gateway with new buildings and enhanced landscaping.	161	\$\$\$\$	C	Public/ Private			X				
8.5	The Oak Hill Iron Block should be enhanced with a revised parking strategy and creative infill development.	162	\$\$\$\$	C	Public/ Private			X				

Reference Number	Project/Task	Page Number	Level of Public Funding Required	Operating or Capital Expenditure	Private or Non-City Expenditure	On-going	Year 1-5	Year 6-10	Year 11-15	Year 16-20	Year 20+	Code/Policy
<b>9 Management &amp; Operations Strategies</b>												
9.1	Use both short-term and long-term parking strategies to manage this public utility.	169	\$-\$\$\$	O+C	Public/ Private	X						
9.2	Expand the policy toolbox to include a ground floor use overlay district, viewshed protection overlay district, commercial maintenance ordinance and downtown design guidelines.	171	\$\$	O								X
9.3	Schedule a commercial broker tour of downtown with representation from both Charlotte and Asheville.	172	\$	O			X					
9.4	Expand the toolbox of local grants, programs and incentives available through city budget appropriations.	172	\$\$	O								X
9.5	In addition to state and federal tax credits, expand the local DIG program to include local tax incentives for housing projects.	173	\$	O								X
9.6	Program smaller public and semi-public spaces with more frequent programming.	176	\$	O		X						
9.7	Utilize the streets as key public spaces.	176	\$	O		X						
9.8	Offer event grant funding to support downtown vitality by non-city organizations.	176	\$	O								X



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### 10.3 How We Know We Succeeded

The next chapter of Morganton’s story is one that builds on all of the success and energy downtown has experienced over the past ten years. Looking ahead, several benchmarks will be strong indicators that the city has implemented the ideas set forth in this plan. They will be signs of success and vibrancy!

#### Union and Sterling will be full of people—day and night.

More people will be living downtown and creating an 18 hour cycle of activity. Residents will be walking their dogs and exercising on the city streets in the early morning hours, and the coffee shops will be overflowing. Lunch will be a bustling time of day, and families will be relaxing and playing in Courthouse Square. In the evenings (even on week nights), the restaurants and breweries will overflow out into the streets in the courtyards listening to homegrown music.



#### Retail and restaurant rents will outperform office.

The higher rents for retail and restaurants speaks to not only the demand but also the stability of those businesses. Property owners will have the financial incentive to move existing office tenants upstairs and around the corner in favor to active tenants along the main streets.



#### We’ve added 200 more housing units to the downtown area.

Millennials and empty nesters alike want to live in downtown Morganton. Two hundred units in a variety of styles and price points will indicate that the city is actively receiving developer interest and that builders are responding to the market demand.



#### We’ve created a REAL parking problem.

Downtown Morganton will be full of people using all modes of transportation. Residents will choose to utilize ride share programs, walk and bike to avoid trying to find a parking space. The spaces will be occupied by visitors spending money in downtown!



# The secret to unlocking the potential of place is PEOPLE! Creating places where people want to dine, shop, play, relax, and make memories!

## People of all ages, ethnicities and economic levels will be downtown.

The city will flourish with diversity and yield the benefits of our multi-cultural community in retail/restaurant offerings and event programming.



## Children will be playing and making memories in downtown.

From interactive water fountains at Courthouse Square to testing their courage on the urban rock wall, to simply feeling comfortable riding their bicycles downtown to grab some ice cream after school, our downtown will be inviting to children of all ages.



## Entrepreneurs will have opened 10 more businesses.

New business bring new energy to the downtown. And, ideally, these entrants help to fill gaps in the activity on key streets. Most importantly, local investment expands our authentic story to the world.



## Partnerships and old fashioned hard work will have made it happen.

The success will be built on the community's shoulders, and everyone will feel a sense of pride at how far downtown has come. The story of Morganton is one of collaboration, dedication, and the relentless pursuit of building community.



